

F1 Hamilton edges clear as Verstappen goes off track

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6 MAY 2021

F1 2021

LEWIS **2** MAX **1**

How Hamilton overtook
Verstappen and Bottas
to win in Portugal

YOUR
12
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era with Spa victory

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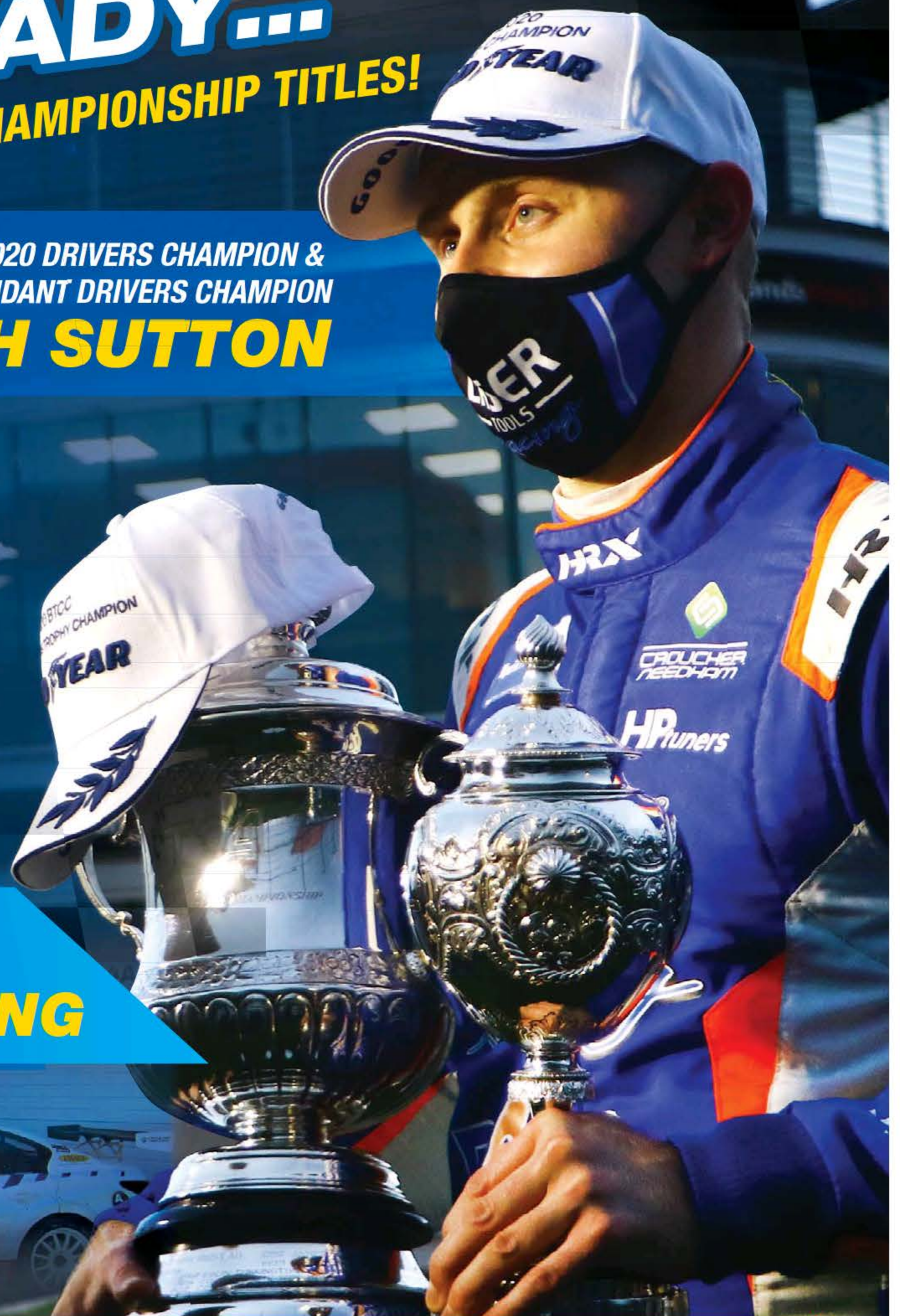
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The little things Lewis is getting right that Max needs to address

Max Verstappen did the fastest laps in both qualifying and the race at the Algarve Circuit last weekend, but he didn't start from pole position and he didn't set fastest lap. And he didn't win either.

Red Bull and many fans are frustrated by the track limits rules, but it's not a problem that's going to go away. It's irritating, but it's a small price to pay for safer circuits. And they need to be policed so drivers don't take advantage of them, which has happened many times before.

As Alex Kalinauckas points out on page 14, Verstappen needs to cut out those sorts of errors. They're minor but they have already cost him 15 points in his fight with Lewis Hamilton – the 14-point swing in Bahrain after he had to hand the lead back to the Mercedes, and the lost point for fastest lap in the Portuguese Grand Prix (a rubbish rule, but that's for another time!). Hamilton is only eight points ahead...

By contrast, Hamilton bounced back after his restart snafu to take another victory that at times looked unlikely, and overcame many challenges to do so (p16). Red Bull and Verstappen need to make the most of their new-found competitiveness soon, and surely the aero-dependent nature of the Barcelona circuit this weekend will provide the perfect opportunity for the RB16B to equal the score in 2021.

The British Touring Car Championship also finally kicks off at Thruxton this weekend. Turn to page 46 for Marcus Simmons's guide on what – and who – to look out for.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
13 MAY**

**Spanish GP and BTCC
Report from Barcelona
and all the Thruxton
tin-top action**



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IMAGES**

Steven Tee/
Motorsport Images

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Penske had huge success with RS Spyder. Inset: Penske and Porsche top brass announce deal



PENSKE TO TAKE ON LE MANS

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

The news that Porsche is renewing its partnership with Penske for its forthcoming LMDh programme in 2023 is hardly a surprise. A link-up in the IMSA SportsCar Championship appeared to be on the cards once Team Penske's arrangement with Acura came to an end last season. But the confirmation of the deal on Tuesday included another bit of news: Penske and Porsche will also be working together in the World Endurance Championship.

Penske will run Porsche's factory campaigns in both IMSA and the WEC when the German manufacturer's LMP2-based LMDh contender comes on stream in 2023. A pair of cars will be fielded in each series under the Porsche Penske Motorsport banner for what was described in the announcement as "a number of years".

It will be the latest chapter in the emotive Porsche/Penske success story. Penske won 12 out of 17 races across the 1972 and 1973 Can-Am seasons with the Porsche 917/10 and then the 917/30 as George Follmer and Mark Donohue swept to consecutive titles. More

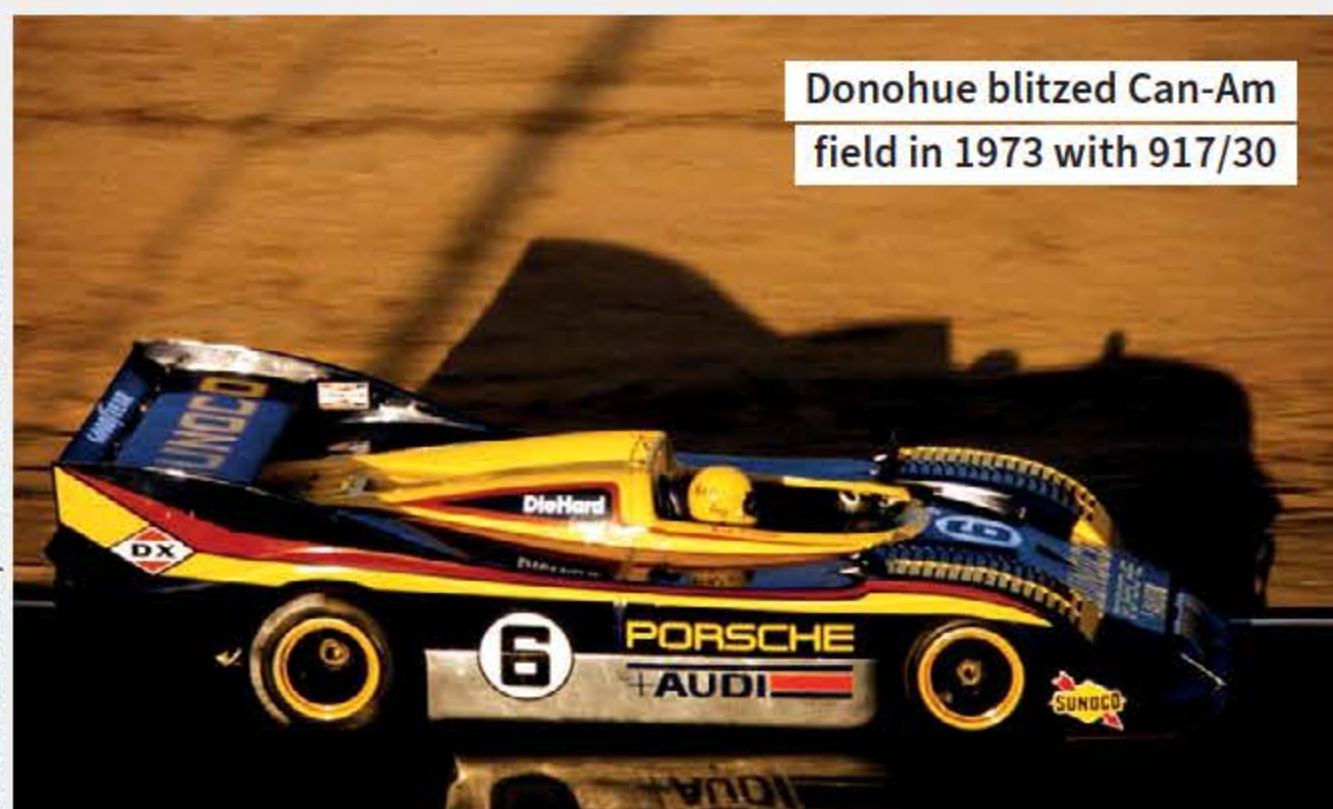
than 30 years later, Penske and Porsche repeated their success with the RS Spyder LMP2 prototype in the American Le Mans Series from the end of 2005 until 2008. They took a trio of titles together, as well as 24 class victories and 11 overall, including the Sebring 12 Hours in 2008. That's not to forget a short-lived Grand-Am campaign with a Porsche-engined Riley Daytona Prototype that yielded a trio of podiums in 2009.

"Porsche and Penske share a proven track record of success: this partnership had a lasting impact from 2005 to 2008 on what was then the ALMS," said Porsche Motorsport head Fritz Enzinger. "Team Penske has made a name for itself with an almost unparalleled success story in motorsport. In the long list of victories to date, however, the name 'Le Mans' has been missing. I hope that we will finally be able to chalk up this success as of 2023 with Porsche Penske Motorsport. This would then mark Porsche's 20th overall victory at La Sarthe — a dream come true."

Porsche chairman Oliver Blume pointed out that it will be "the first time in the history of Porsche Motorsport that our company will have a global team competing in the world's two largest endurance series". "To this end, we will be setting up team bases on both sides of the Atlantic," he continued. "This will enable us to create the optimal structures we will need to take overall victories at Le Mans, Daytona and Sebring, for example."

The LMDh operations will be based at Penske's headquarters in Mooresville, North Carolina, but it has yet to be revealed from where the WEC campaign will be masterminded.

Team founder Roger Penske, who has made no secret of his desire to take his squad back to the Le Mans 24 Hours for the first time since a campaign with a Ferrari 512M in 1971, said the announcement



Donohue blitzed Can-Am field in 1973 with 917/30



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WITH PORSCHE

of the return to the Porsche fold made for “a proud day for the entire Penske organisation”.

Porsche reiterated its stance to have customer teams racing its new LMDh in both arenas from the outset of the programme. That position was mirrored by sister marque Audi last week when it took the wraps off further details of its LMDh programme, which will also come on stream in 2023. “Our goal is to also put the car in the hands of professional customer teams right from the start, in parallel to factory entries,” said Andreas Roos, who heads up the LMDh and Dakar Rally programmes at Audi Sport. “We are currently evaluating internally how this will work in detail.”

Audi’s statement revealed that it had already selected which of the four constructors licensed to build new-generation LMP2s it will partner, and that it has decided upon an engine concept for the car. It also explained that it is cooperating closely with Porsche on LMDh development.

Porsche factory motorsport boss Pascal Zurlinden, speaking at last weekend’s Spa 6 Hours WEC round, would not elaborate on what were described as ‘synergies’ between the two marques in the face of speculation that both are basing their LMDh contenders on the P2 chassis under development at Multimatic Motorsport. He also refused to deny that Porsche and Audi will use the same engine. Zurlinden said there would be more technical news on the programme later this month.

Porsche’s LMDh is scheduled to be up and running as early as the end of this year. Audi has stated that it will be ready to run its prototype in the first quarter of 2022.

GARY WATKINS

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24 Hours date is fixed, even if it’s closed to fans

LE MANS 24 HOURS

The Le Mans 24 Hours will go ahead on its new August date, even if it is run behind closed doors for a second year in succession. But race organiser the Automobile Club de l’Ouest remains confident that it will be able to welcome a significant crowd.

ACO president Pierre Fillon stated at last weekend’s Spa 6 Hours World Endurance Championship opener that there are no plans to push back this year’s blue-riband round of the series from 21-22 August to ensure that spectators can be accommodated. “Whatever happens Le Mans will not change [date], even if it is without spectators,” he said. “We have no choice: we have Fuji [round five of the 2021 WEC] in September.”

Fillon stressed that he is convinced that this year’s 24 Hours, which was originally scheduled on its traditional mid-June date, will be able to accommodate spectators, though not the quarter of a million people who typically attend in a normal year. “We are confident to organise Le Mans with public,” he explained. “I don’t know how many people, not 250,000 for sure – it will depend on the pandemic.”

Last year’s race was set for an attendance of approximately 50,000 spectators accommodated in 5000-strong bubbles around the eight-mile circuit after being postponed until 19-20 September.

That plan had to be abandoned by the ACO in August after discussions with the government and local authorities.

Fillon pointed out at Spa that French president Emmanuel Macron had just unveiled a road map for his country’s withdrawal from its current lockdown. The stages, announced last Thursday, include allowing tourism, subject to arrivals producing a negative PCR test result or a certificate of vaccination, from 9 June. Most restrictions are set to be lifted on 30 June, though COVID-19 protocols are likely to remain in place.

Macron has made it clear that the timetable remains provisional and could be delayed in areas where intensive care units are close to capacity and COVID-19 incidence exceeds 400 cases per 100,000 people.

Fillon explained that the ACO is working on a plan for spectators to be required to present a negative COVID test result before being allowed into the circuit. He said that the test would need to be taken no more than 72 hours before entry. That suggests that fans arriving from the UK would be allowed to attend Le Mans on the same PCR certificate they will require for travel.

Fillon also revealed that the ACO would be organising testing stations in the vicinity of the Circuit de la Sarthe.

GARY WATKINS

ALFA LOSES ITS RAIKKONEN PENALTY APPEAL

FORMULA 1

Alfa Romeo's bid to get Kimi Raikkonen's quirky penalty from the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix overturned nearly two weeks later fell short when the stewards threw out the case last Sunday.

Raikkonen lost his first points of the season after being handed a 30-second post-race penalty at Imola, causing him to drop from eighth to 13th in the results. He was penalised after going off behind the safety car and failing to return to his original position before the restart, with the rules stipulating that he should have entered the pitlane.

Alfa Romeo lodged an appeal at last weekend's Portuguese Grand Prix after bringing significant and relevant new evidence to light, resulting in a second hearing. But the penalty was upheld despite the stewards sympathising with the team, conceding there was "ambiguity" in the rules and "no precedence" since the regulation was introduced in 2018.

The team fielded Ferrari protege Callum Ilott in FP1 at the Algarve Circuit, where he finished 17th and lapped just 0.4 seconds off Raikkonen. "I was building the consistency, and was very happy with the session," said Ilott (below). "Lots learned from my side, I think lots learned from the team. So big thanks to Alfa Romeo for giving me the opportunity."

LUKE SMITH



Turkish GP replaces Canada

FORMULA 1

The Turkish Grand Prix has joined the Formula 1 calendar for the 2021 season following the cancellation of next month's Canadian GP in Montreal.

F1 will return to Istanbul Park for the 11-13 June weekend after officials announced last week that the Canadian GP had been scrapped for a second straight year. The race was cancelled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but F1 had remained hopeful of returning after listing the race in Montreal on the initial calendar.

But it emerged last month that Canada looked set to be cancelled amid tight entry restrictions, and Turkey has stepped in as a replacement.

"Due to the ongoing international travel restrictions in place in Canada it became impossible for Formula 1 to enter the country without a mandatory 14-day quarantine," read a statement from F1. "We are grateful for the efforts of the promoter and the authorities in Canada, Quebec and Montreal in the past few weeks to try and

make the race happen. We will work with the promoter to ensure those with tickets from 2020 and 2021 races get the options of a refund or to transfer their tickets to next year's race, and look forward to racing in Canada in 2022."

As part of the announcement, F1 revealed that a two-year contract extension had been agreed with promoters in Montreal for the Canadian GP, extending the existing deal through to 2031.

Turkey will now form a back-to-back with the Azerbaijan GP, which takes place one week earlier.

Turkey rejoined the F1 calendar for the first time in nine years in 2020 as part of the revised schedule. Lewis Hamilton clinched a record-equalling seventh world championship with a stunning wet-weather drive as fresh asphalt and cold conditions caused drivers to struggle.

But drivers have already aired concerns about the state of the asphalt ahead of this year's race, with Hamilton fearing it could be "horrendous" on the 2021 tyres.

LUKE SMITH



Corvette hero Gavin retires

SPORTSCARS

Oliver Gavin hung up his helmet after climbing out of the solo Chevrolet Corvette C8.R racing in last weekend's Spa round of the World Endurance Championship. The Briton, a five-time class winner at the Le Mans 24 Hours, revealed ahead of the race that it would be his final outing as a professional driver.

The announcement last Thursday followed Gavin standing down from the full-time Corvette Racing line-up at the end of last season's IMSA SportsCar Championship. At the same time he took the wraps off a new initiative called the Oliver Gavin Driving Academy based around the latest Chevrolet Corvette Stingray that goes on sale in Europe this year.

"I've been working on the academy for the past three or four years, but last November I couldn't announce it and at the same time I knew there would be opportunities like this one at Spa," said 48-year-old Gavin. "I've had a lot of time to think since the end of last season. Helen, my wife, has told me that since I stopped driving full-time I'm a different person."

Gavin explained that his ongoing links with Chevrolet – he will remain an ambassador for the Corvette in Europe –



mean he would not have been allowed to drive for other marques. He explained that he was given permission to race for the Vasser Sullivan Lexus team in January's Daytona 24 Hours as a one-off at a time when plans for his academy were not firmed up. "I'm not saying that I won't drive something with someone some day, or do the odd Goodwood Revival again," he explained. "What I am saying is that this is the end of my professional racing career."

The academy will be based at the Bosch

proving ground at Boxberg near Stuttgart in Germany, and is aimed at new and existing Corvette customers. Twelve new European-spec Stingrays have been bought by the business. "It's part-racing school and about educating people on how a Corvette works and how to be a better performance driver," he said. "But we also want to bring our customers to the races once we are allowed to involve them with the Corvette Racing team."

GARY WATKINS



Rossi's team to move into MotoGP

MOTOGP

MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi will take his VR46 team into the premier class in 2022 after agreeing a five-year deal with Saudia Arabian oil giant Aramco as title sponsor.

The nine-time grand prix motorcycle world champion has operated teams in Moto2 and Moto3 since 2014, and has backed half-brother Luca Marini's (left) promotion to the Avintia MotoGP squad

in 2021, in which he is riding a Ducati in VR46 colours.

With Avintia set to depart MotoGP at the end of the current season, VR46's backing of Marini's side of the garage was seen as paving the way for the team to take over both Avintia grid slots from 2022.

Though the VR46 squad is yet to officially confirm its MotoGP team, several key figures from the organisation, including Rossi himself, corroborated the press release

from Tanal Entertainment last week announcing the tie-up with VR46 and Aramco.

It's unclear yet which manufacturer will supply machinery to VR46, with Rossi revealing that discussions have been held with Suzuki, Aprilia, Ducati and Yamaha. Rossi's right-hand man Uccio Salucci told Sky Italy at last weekend's Spanish GP that a decision on bikes will be made before next week's French GP.

LEWIS DUNCAN

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Vancouver set for 2022 Formula E date



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FORMULA E

Canada is set for a Formula E reprise in July 2022 after Vancouver City Council voted 9-1 in favour of opening its doors to the series to “support recovery of the gutted tourism sector”.

Montreal hosted the 2016-17 season finale double-header just as a new mayor swiftly pulled the plug due to the cost to the taxpayer and disruption to residents. So as part of a seemingly changing model for pitching a prospective Formula E event, a concert, technology conference and celebrity race have been tabled for

Vancouver to better justify the bid.

False Creek has been selected as the host region, and the proposed circuit will run past local landmarks such as Science World and the Rogers Arena just as the CART Indycar layout did between 1990 and 2004, with Formula E commentator Dario Franchitti winning in 1998 and 2002 (above).

The city council will partner race promoter One Stop Strategy Group, also involved in the launch of the one-off 2019 Bern E-Prix in Switzerland. It has been working on the bid for two years and wants a three-year deal.

Formula E chief executive officer and

Canadian Jamie Reigle flew to Vancouver from the 2021 season-opening Diriyah E-Prix at the end of February.

OSS Group CEO and ex-Lotus Formula 1 boss Matthew Carter said: “We were approached by Formula E to look for a city to host a race in Canada. We decided Vancouver was the best fit. What we’re offering is much more than just a Formula E race. The three components with the business conference, the concerts and the race is very unique. I’m hoping that this will become the jewel in Formula E’s crown, and they’ll take this business model to other cities.”

MATT KEW

Schumacher-beater Mawson wins Aussie crown

\$5000

Ex-European single-seater ace Joey Mawson has won the historic Australian Drivers’ Championship, run this year for the first time for the Formula 5000-inspired S5000 category.

Mawson returned to his native Australia after beating Mick Schumacher to the 2016 German Formula 4 title and then becoming a podium finisher in the Formula 3 European Championship.

The S5000 category made its debut in 2019, before it fell victim to the coronavirus

pandemic in 2020. Four rounds were scheduled in 2021, and victories in the finals at rounds two and three – Phillip Island and Sandown – put Mawson in

the box seat heading into last weekend’s finale at Sydney Motorsport Park.

Mawson survived a scare when he went off in the finale

to wrap up the title with Team BRM, with veteran Tim Macrow finishing as runner-up. Ex-British F3 ace Tom Randle, winner of the Symmons Plains opener on his return after chemotherapy, was third in the rankings, with Sydney final winner James Golding fourth.

“I’ve got my name in history now,” said Mawson. “There’s a lot of drivers that I’ve looked up to and have been heroes of mine that have won this championship. I can’t really put it into words how amazing this result is.”

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN



Le Mans winner Whittington was a five-time Indy 500 starter, pictured in 1981

HUTSON
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Bill Whittington 1949-2021

OBITUARY

Bill Whittington, who has died aged 71 in a plane crash, achieved a lot in a short racing career that ended after just eight seasons when he was imprisoned on drugs-related charges. He won the Le Mans 24 Hours and a total of 10 IMSA GT Championship races, as well as making five Indy 500 starts.

Whittington, along with elder brother Don, arrived in the IMSA series from the world of air racing in 1978. Little more than a year after their respective sportscar debuts, they won Le Mans together with Klaus Ludwig aboard a Kremer Porsche 935 K3 Group 5 car.

They triumphed in a race of attrition despite their Porsche spending an hour parked on the side of the Mulsanne Straight after the injector belt failed. Don Whittington managed to jury-rig a fix to get a car that had been in the lead by 15 laps back to the pits.

The Whittingtons were much more than bit players in the victory – they did the

lion's share of the driving in a car that they had purchased just prior to the race.

"Klaus didn't drive so much," remembered long-time Kremer team manager Achim Stroth. "Bill and Don did most of the driving because it was now their car, and they were definitely good drivers. The quicker of the two was definitely Bill, but Don had the better technical knowledge, which was lucky because he was in the car when it broke."

Whittington's most successful season in IMSA was 1984. He took four victories driving a March-Chevrolet 83G for the Blue Thunder Racing team he ran together with Randy Lanier.

Whittington's five starts in the Indy 500 came between 1979 and 1985. He never finished in the top 10, but qualified sixth aboard a family-entered March-Cosworth 81C in 1982.

A 15-year prison sentence for conspiracy to smuggle marijuana and tax evasion ended his racing career in 1986.

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

LAMBORGHINI FOR DTM

A Lamborghini will be on the grid for this season's DTM. Dresden team T3 Motorsport is stepping up to the series to field a single Huracan GT3 Evo. The driver will be 19-year-old Belgian Esteban Muth, who showed promise in single-seaters before switching to GTs in 2019. T3 was set to miss this week's official DTM test at the Lausitzring as the car is not yet ready.

CREES FOLDS HIS DEAL

British Touring Car Championship team BTC Racing was down to just two Honda Civic Type Rs for this weekend's Thruxton opener as we went to press, after 2020 Jack Sears Trophy champion Michael Crees left the team. A BTC statement stressed that the departure came "on amicable terms", and that a replacement driver to join Josh Cook and Jade Edwards would be announced "prior to Thruxton".

WORLD CUP FOR PURE ETCR

The new-for-2021 electric Pure ETCR series has been given FIA 'world cup' status for its second season. From 2022, the contest will be known as the FIA eTouring Car World Cup following an agreement between the governing body and Eurosport Events to promote it. Meanwhile, the Romeo Ferraris team has confirmed former GP2 veteran and ex-IndyCar racer Luca Filippi as the second driver for its squad of Giulia ETCRs. Stefano Coletti was already confirmed, with two more yet to be named.

IRISH LAD'S DUNNE WELL

Irish 15-year-old Alex Dunne starred on his car-racing debut in last weekend's Spanish Formula 4 opener at Spa by claiming pole position with Pinnacle Motorsport. The son of 2006 Formula Ford Kent Festival winner Noel Dunne converted that to a best result of third from the 28-car field. He has been taken under the wing of Hong Kong motorsport giant KCMG as a development driver.

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Bobby Unser 1934-2021

OBITUARY

Bobby Unser, who died last Sunday aged 87, was a highly charismatic man and a wonderful driver. Forty years since his retirement from Indycar racing, his stats put him in the pantheon. He raced in an era when reliability could not be taken for granted, so the fact that he amassed 35 wins – still eighth in the all-time list – is impressive enough.

Yet it's his 49 pole positions (fifth best of all time) and 4863 laps led (seventh) that highlight his pace, bravery and sheer chutzpah. Whether it was wringing everything out of Dan Gurney's gorgeous Eagles – with which he scored his first two Indy 500 victories – or learning to master ground-effect Penskes in his amazing career twilight that included a third Indy triumph, he always gave 101%.

"Bobby was like Mario [Andretti] – wanted to lead every lap," his brother Al told this writer several years ago. "I only had to lead one, the last one. No one remembers who led lap 1, or 25 or 50... The crowd loved Bobby, because he'd just unscrew his brain and go after it from the green flag."

Although respectful of each other's talents, Bobby and Al – five years his junior – sounded naturally quarrelsome even when agreeing on matters, including Bobby's racing ethos. When this author asked Bobby if his hard-charge was

philosophy was costly, bearing in mind that through the early 1970s he traditionally led more laps in a season than any of his rivals, yet only in 1974 did that translate into a second championship to back up the one he earned in 1968, he explained: "The most important thing for a driver to do to turn from a pay driver to a paid driver is practise fast, qualify fast, lead the race. Then everyone takes notice – media, team owners, sponsors. So even if he never wins, that driver will always have a job. That was always my theory and I always had a job for the following season. I was never without a race car lined up... I think if drivers race like that, they don't need to worry about sponsor deals."

That was Bobby – he had a very different-sounding philosophy to that

of most champions (win at the slowest possible speed) and was never afraid to express it or explain it. Expressing and explaining his theories is what made him such a delightful foil to the more measured Sam Posey and the straight-down-the-middle Paul Page when they worked together in the commentary booth in the 1980s and 1990s.

Unser was a great raconteur. He and his effervescent wife Lisa were always popular visitors to Indianapolis Motor Speedway each May, when his dear friends – legendary journalist Robin Miller and BorgWarner's Steve Shunk – would prod him to regale us with more stories. Then, should you need to formally interview him, he was golden; he'd listen carefully to the question, deliver his opinion, and then go off on some mightily entertaining tangents. You might only use about 5% of what he gave you, but that was because he had overdelivered and left you spoilt for choice.

While he would take jokes against himself with ease, so too Unser enjoyed being the one doing the teasing. Long after he scored his 13 wins in the notoriously scary Pikes Peak Hill Climb, he'd get a kick out of driving newcomers up the course at high speed in a road car. Then, at one of those turns where the lip of the track meets Colorado skyline, and in the passenger's imagination all that lies in between is oblivion, he'd pretend the car's brakes were failing or that he'd lost control – and giggle at his companion's overreaction as they crossed the edge to hit previously invisible flat terra firma.

Roger Penske said it right on Monday: "There simply was no one quite like Bobby Unser. Bobby was a ferocious competitor on the track, and his larger-than-life personality made him one of the most beloved and unique racers we have ever seen."

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



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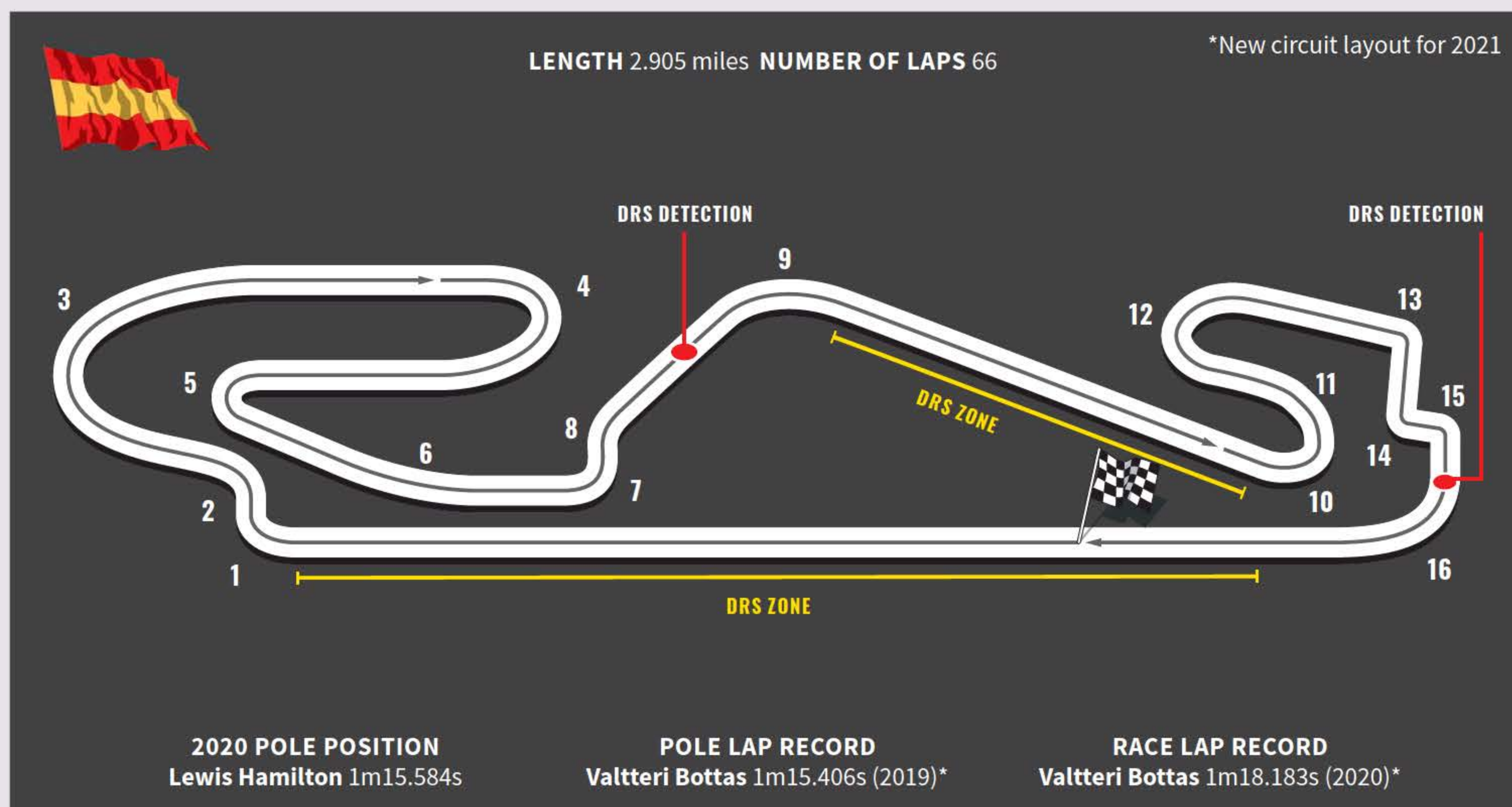
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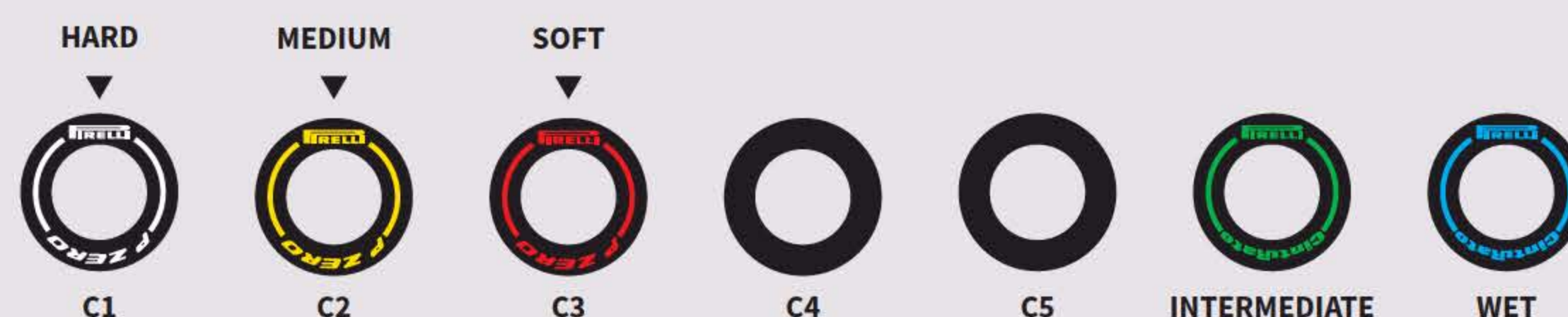
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FP3 1100
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Sunday 9 May
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CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Hamilton	69
2	Verstappen	61
3	Norris	37
4	Bottas	32
5	Leclerc	28

Constructors

1	Mercedes	101
2	Red Bull	83
3	McLaren	53
4	Ferrari	42
5	Alpine	13



RACE STATS

Previous winners

2020	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Fernando Alonso	Ferrari
2012	Pastor Maldonado	Williams
2011	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull



Best results

Hamilton	1st x 5
Alonso	1st x 2
Raikkonen	1st x 2
Vettel	1st x 1
Verstappen	1st x 1
Bottas	2nd x 2
Ricciardo	3rd x 2
Perez	4th x 1
Stroll	4th x 1
Leclerc	5th x 1



What Red Bull needs to change

Mercedes' main rival has the pace to vanquish the reigning world champion team. But it'll only do so consistently if it eliminates mistakes, especially its star driver's

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

“Now we've lost victory, fastest lap, and pole position,” Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko told Sky Sports Germany after last weekend's Portuguese Grand Prix. “Something has to change. Either you make a boundary with kerbs or you make gravel or something. If you go out, there's an automatic penalty.”

So far, so baffling. Max Verstappen had just finished second behind Lewis Hamilton, but Red Bull was annoyed that he had lost the bonus point for fastest lap, for running too wide out of the penultimate corner and sliding beyond the kerbs. The stewards did exactly what Marko suggests above and deleted the lap.

Somewhat amusingly, Red Bull and Verstappen were only in this position because of a Mercedes own goal. The Black Arrows squad had decided to bring Valtteri Bottas into the pits — such was his advantage over Sergio Perez in the closing stages — to chase the fastest lap Perez held at that point. But it acted one lap too early, as Red Bull had time to bring Verstappen in for his own, doomed, attempt to grab the extra point on the final lap.

But the number of visible errors made by the Mercedes squad (including its drivers, with Lewis Hamilton botching the safety car restart and Bottas overdefending against his team-mate in what became the race-winning move) across the sessions that mattered in Portugal were essentially matched by Verstappen alone. He lost a time good enough for pole by going beyond track limits at the fast

“The number of visible errors the Mercedes squad made were matched by Verstappen alone”

Turn 4 left that leads onto the back straight. But given he was catching an oversteer snap at a place where the wind was causing havoc for the drivers all weekend, it's perhaps harsh to put this down to a mistake. The bigger problem was failing to replicate the time on his second run — although, again, Verstappen does have a point about the traffic he encountered late in that final Q3 lap.

Then there was the pair of moments Verstappen had in quick succession while running through the penultimate corner that allowed Hamilton to close in and retake second place. Plus, the last-lap fumble at the same spot that (rightly) cost Verstappen the bonus point. The errors, tiny as they are, are starting to mount up. Those logged in Portugal stand beside the slip off the road while battling Hamilton in Bahrain, losing Imola pole, and so nearly squandering the lead at that race's red flag restart (a mistake

that ultimately had no consequences).

At this point it'd be fair to point out that Red Bull does have some cause for gripes about track limits, as tedious as that debate is overall. Perez was furious that Lando Norris wasn't ordered to give fourth place back after the safety car restart last weekend, as he felt that the McLaren driver had put all four wheels over the Turn 4 exit kerb (and therefore gained a lasting advantage) before pulling alongside to pass into the subsequent hairpin. The onboard from Norris's car and the following Carlos Sainz Jr appear to support this position. “That was actually reported by Red Bull during the race and was reviewed,” explained F1 race director Michael Masi, who, it should be noted, was incorrectly asked about the legality of Norris's move at the hairpin, which wasn't the issue.

This all followed the track limits debate in Bahrain, which seemed to leave a certain amount of frustration at both Red Bull and Mercedes. But in the former's case, the continuing anger about track limits goes over another, probably more crucial, problem.

The Portuguese GP result was far from bad for Red Bull. Despite Mercedes' insistence earlier this season that it expected last weekend's venue to hand its rival an advantage, the W12 appeared much happier than it had previously. Cooler temperatures played a part, but Mercedes was utterly dominant in Portugal in 2020, and Red Bull was right with it this time. Verstappen defeated Bottas on merit. But there's a lingering feeling that the result might have been different had Verstappen started from pole, or not allowed Hamilton back into position to attack early on, with Red Bull team boss Christian Horner highlighting his strong pace in clean air.

Hamilton is making mistakes in 2021 too. But, so far, he is winning the 'fine-margin'/'marginal-gain' tight fight at the front. Although, had it not been for the red flag rules, Hamilton's Imola off would have had bigger consequences.

There's a big challenge coming in this weekend's Spanish GP. Mercedes' only defeat in what has become something of a citadel event for it since 2014 came after its drivers took each other out and Verstappen scored a famous first win in the aftermath in 2016.

The Barcelona track will put the 2021 pecking order under a different sort of scrutiny given how familiar it is to the teams. Mercedes is wary of the surface “getting quite aggressive”, according to its director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin, and the resulting impact on rear tyre life maybe reawakening its Bahrain woes. That means the times for the final sector and its low-speed turns will be worth watching to see who's doing best. But given Red Bull's 2020–21 Algarve progress, it's surely set to be very close again. If Verstappen can finally be perfect, then that might just make the difference in equalling the score against Hamilton. ❧

➔ P16 PORTUGUESE GP REPORT



Taking a ride with a legend

When Mario Andretti offers you a hot lap in a two-seater IndyCar, it's inconceivable that anyone would turn him down...

CHARLES BRADLEY

If an 81-year-old man tells you he once hung up the phone in disgust on country pop star Keith Urban, but that turned out to be a good thing as it led to a date with Lady Gaga, you'd be quite inclined to disbelieve him. But when the man in question is Mario Andretti, you know that it absolutely happened!

Allow me to explain this scenario: 1978 Formula 1 world champion Andretti has been the star driver of the IndyCar Experience two-seater programme for over 15 years. In this time, all manner of celebrities and dignitaries have had the chance to lap a race track, chauffeured by the legendary 1969 Indianapolis 500 winner, just before the start of each IndyCar race.

For the 100th Indy 500 in 2016, singer/songwriter Urban was lined up to take his place in the back seat. With less than 48 hours to go, Mario got a call – and takes up the story...

"I said, 'Keith, I'm so looking forward to seeing you Sunday', and he says, 'Oh Mario, Mario... I'm not coming. I'm like, 'WHAT?! You have to be joking me!'; and he says, 'Well, I've twisted my back and I don't want to take a chance.' I said, 'Well, if you've twisted your back, this will be good therapy for it,' and he said, 'I can't come.' So I replied, 'You have to be dead not to come to this event,' and he says, 'I'm sorry, I'm not dead...' Boom, I hung up on him."

Fortunately, Lady Gaga was a guest of the Speedway on race day, so Andretti approached her instead: "She wasn't sure to begin with, so she called her mother. Her mother says [shouting], 'If you don't do it, I'm gonna do it!' [he giggles]. It was so cute. She was amazing actually."

Mario then gets out his cellphone and insists on showing me the photos in his favourites – most of the images seem to involve Lady Gaga either hugging or kissing him!

It was my turn to be the lucky one on Saturday evening at St Petersburg, as I jumped into the 'fastest seat in sports' thanks to Andretti Autosport and the new sponsor for the programme, Ruoff Mortgage. Climbing in behind that achingly cool red-on-silver helmet design, it truly dawned on me that it was for real, when I looked into the wing mirror and saw those Andretti eyes staring back. I asked the guy who was strapping me in to pinch me, but he just laughed.

Starter engaged, Andretti hits the ignition and lights up the rears. As you'd expect, the acceleration matches the furious noise that's punching me in the back, and we hit the streets of St Pete for a whirlwind lap. Through the twisty section, where the corners arrive much quicker than you'd imagine, I can see, over Mario's shoulder, his elegantly smooth steering inputs, the vision really good with just one pyramid-style rollhoop in front of me.

Andretti drives hard into the couple of fast, sweeping bends – the left-hander on Bayshore Drive and the right/left as we



approach the Albert Whitted Airport, just breathing off the throttle to let the car settle before getting hard on the gas again.

The cruise down the runway is another highlight, the 'helmet suck' indicating we're somewhere north of 150mph before Mario stands on the impressive brakes, and our 1.8-mile joyride is over all too soon. Afterwards he says: "For me, it's just a lot of fun to drive. I'm fortunate that things are still good physically, I haven't given anything up yet! I'm still slalom skiing and flying my ultralights."

Jeff Sinden and Joe Kennedy – who have worked in IndyCar for the likes of Hemelgarn Racing, Galles Racing and Team Cotter – had the idea for the two-seater, which began running in 2001. The IndyCar title sponsor of the time then asked Andretti if he'd like to symbolically 'start the Indy 500' and he loved the idea. Since then, you always see Mario in the two-seater heading the pack before the race starts for real.

"I love the team of guys," he says. "They specially designed and built this car as a two-seater, so it's really good for me. It makes me stay halfway in shape, and they let me set the car up."

Ah, he might be 81, but Andretti remains the racing perfectionist that defines his immaculate career: "The other drivers just jump in and drive. It's all in the book now for each track, they set it up perfectly just as I want it. I'm enjoying it, and it's funny because everyone else wants to drive my car because they know it's the best!"

Apart from Urban, have there been any other reluctant passengers, I ask? "Now Michael... [Mario pauses to chuckle about his son's reaction], he did some driving with the two-seater car now and then. For Indy last year, since Marco was on pole, Roger Penske says, 'Michael, you have to ride with your dad'; and Michael says, 'No way!' [Mario now collapses with the giggles] 'No way!'"

"But he did it, and it was quite a special moment actually." ❧

RACE CENTRE

PORTUGUESE GRAND PRIX • WEC SPA • INDYCAR TEXAS • WORLD OF SPORT

HAMILTON'S DIFFERENT PATH TO A FAMILIAR RESULT

*The Mercedes star won in Portugal, just as he had in 2020,
but there was more to it this time around*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

STAT

8

points separate Hamilton
and Verstappen, who is
now 24 points clear
of third





MAUGER

“

t was a completely different journey to get the result we just got.” That was Lewis Hamilton’s assessment of his 97th Formula 1 career victory, at the 2021 Portuguese Grand Prix. But, really, his triumph at the Algarve Circuit last weekend did bear some noticeable similarities to his win at the same track last October.

In both races, Hamilton fell behind his key rival, and he also had to make vital passes to secure the lead in each event. The difference this time around, though, is that things simply mattered more in terms of the title fight when F1 arrived in Portugal.

Not only is the championship battle still barely getting going, but this time it’s clearly not an intra-Mercedes affair. Max Verstappen and Red Bull are firmly in the mix, and the Dutchman’s presence and pressure, allied with Valtteri Bottas beating Hamilton to pole, added up to a series of key tests the world champion faced before securing his second Portuguese GP win.

TEST ONE ACE THE RESTART (FAILED)

Hamilton made a slightly slower getaway from the front row than Bottas, but it wasn’t enough to give Verstappen a real chance going into the rapid opening corners. In fact, the main action on lap one came

from further back, with Ferrari’s Carlos Sainz Jr easily dispatching the second Red Bull of Sergio Perez at Turn 1 after the Mexican’s poor start (which he blamed on a lack of grip away from the racing line), and Lando Norris and Esteban Ocon exchanging bold passes. Norris braving things out around the outside of the blind approach to Turns 10/11 eventually decided that fight in favour of the McLaren driver.

Bottas’s lead was 0.9 seconds at the end of the first tour, but that was soon irrelevant due to Kimi Raikkonen’s blunder — as he changed a setting on his Alfa Romeo’s steering wheel, he clattered into teammate Antonio Giovinazzi on the start/finish straight. The contact showered the circuit in debris, and Raikkonen, who had the good grace over his team radio to hope that Giovinazzi’s left-rear tyre wasn’t damaged in the clash’s immediate aftermath, found his front wing wedged under his car. This stopped him making the Turn 1 right-hander and put him out in the gravel beyond the corner.

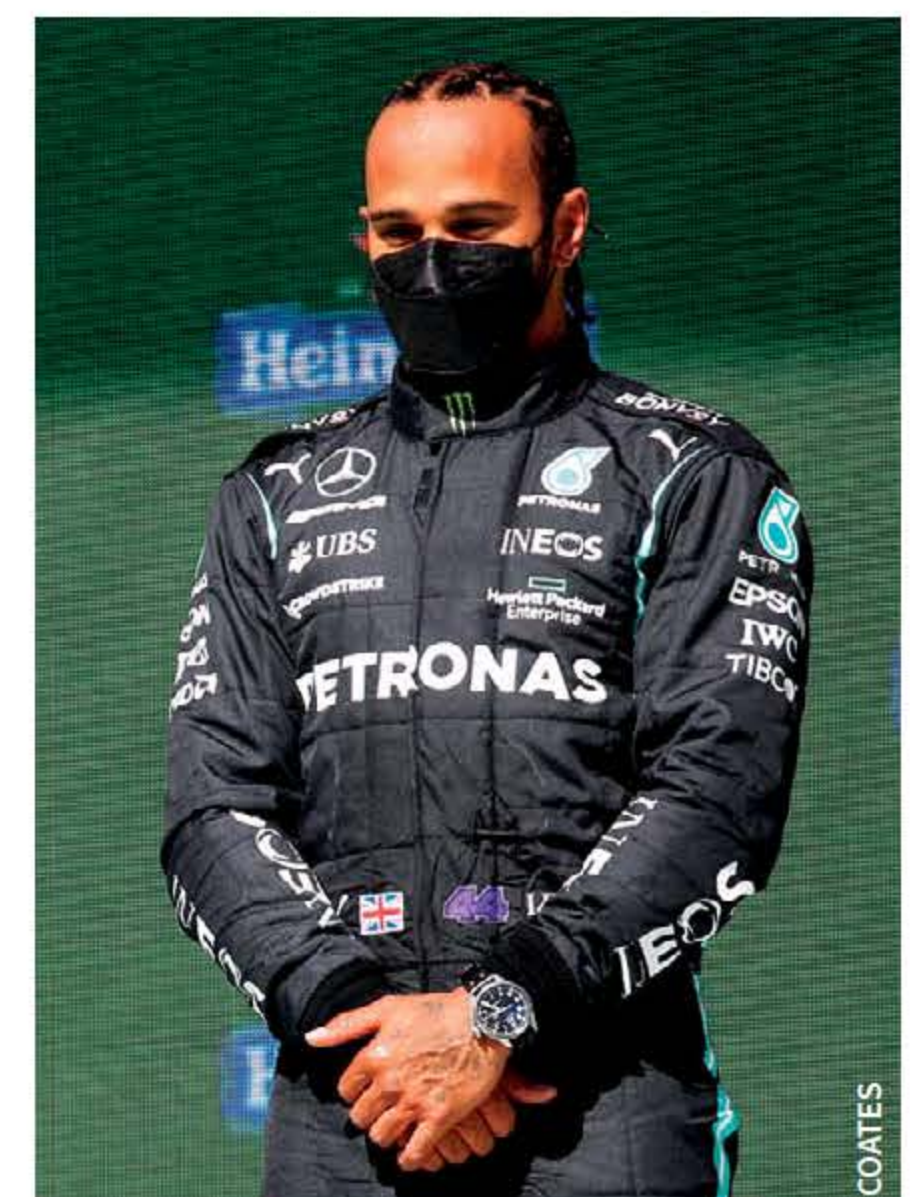
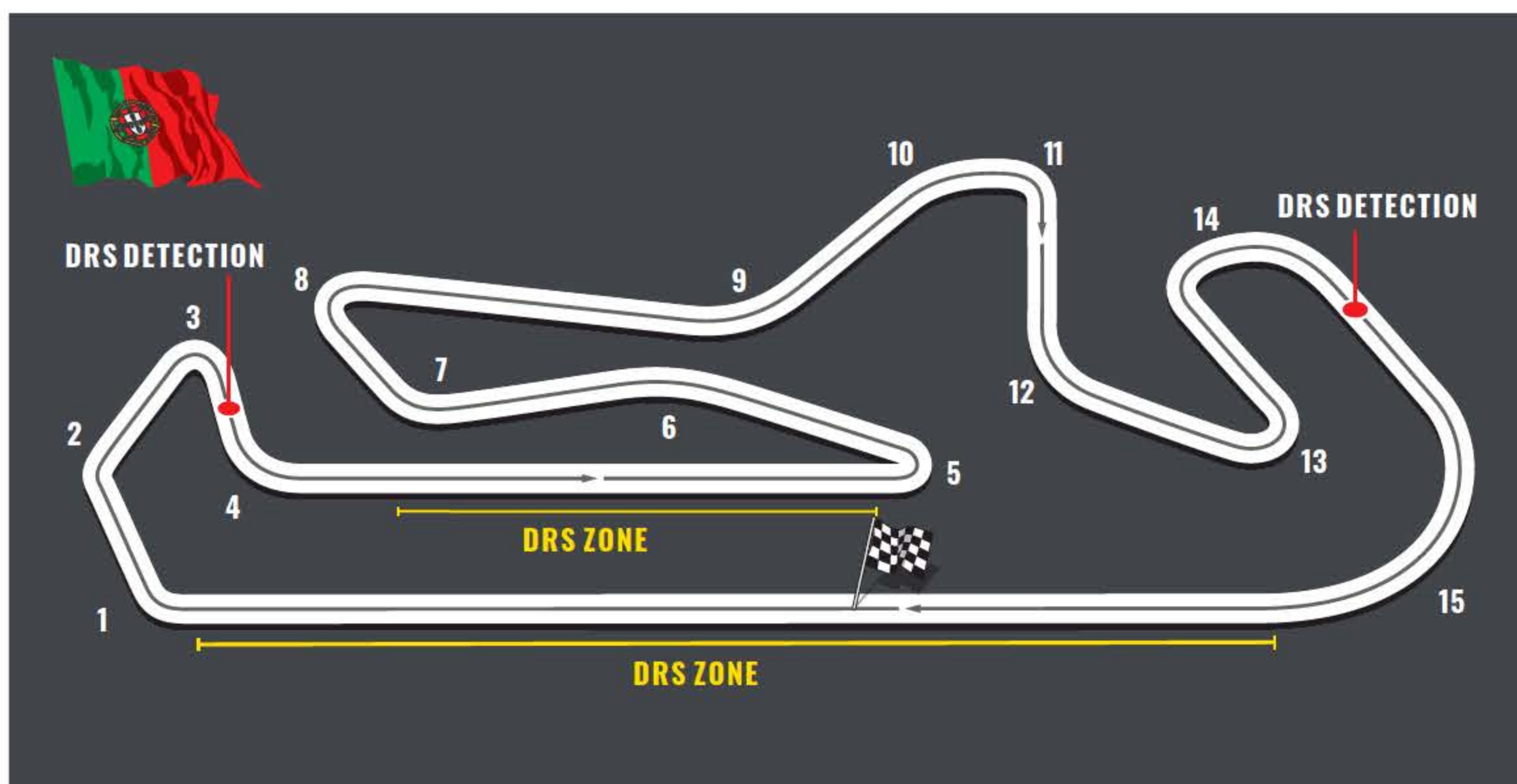
A five-lap safety-car period followed, with the cars twice passing through the pits while the main straight was cleared. The suspension was rather elongated because “Kimi’s car was still being recovered at Turn 1 in the runoff, and also the safety car spotted some debris in a couple of other corners that needed to be retrieved”, according to race director Michael Masi.

When the safety car did peel off for the restart at the beginning of lap seven of 66, Hamilton faced his first test. And it ended up >>



Bottas in control at the start, while Sainz deposes Perez

TRACK





being the only one that he failed.

Mercedes was wary of the long run from the exit of the penultimate corner – Turn 14, high up on the hill overlooking the pitlane entry and sweeping dramatically down to the right – to the braking zone at Turn 1. Bottas was therefore already briefed to leave any restart late, and he only hit the gas at the foot of the sharp rise to the grid that ends the lap. And here Hamilton was caught out.

“I was focusing on Valtteri, naturally, and literally – just for a split second – looked in my mirrors to see where Max was, and in that split second that’s when Valtteri went,” he later explained. “That wasn’t great, and then I was in Valtteri’s tow and Max was about to pull out. I pulled out and gave him Valtteri’s tow. And I was like, ‘you idiot!’ to myself.”

Hamilton’s error was doubly costly. He couldn’t attack for the lead and was under pressure from Verstappen, who lifted as he drew level with Hamilton on the inside before then switching around to the outside line. Hamilton was snookered – unable to move back left, and with Verstappen being nicely dragged along by the leader. The result was an around-the-outside move, with the Red Bull driver catching another of 2021’s late oversteer snaps in wheel-to-wheel passes, but unlike in Bahrain staying within track limits. This allowed Verstappen to give chase to Bottas.

TEST TWO RECLAIM SECOND (PASSED)

For the next four laps, Verstappen pursued Bottas. The race was finely poised at this point, with the leader soon realising he was struggling for pace on the medium tyres, and Verstappen looking the fastest of the three as Hamilton dropped back.

“I fell back, maybe a second or something like that, and I needed to get closer but for a moment there was far too big a gap,” Hamilton explained. “I wasn’t in the DRS, and I just had to gather my thoughts and make a couple of tweaks in terms of how I was driving and then start on the attack again.”

He got a big break on lap 11 in his bid to reclaim second. Verstappen had just fallen out of DRS range behind Bottas as a result of a “little

wobble” the Red Bull suffered coming through Turn 14 on the previous tour. Verstappen was referring to the second of two oversteer snaps he had after passing the apex, the second of which forced him to fully lift off the gas and gather his car, which gave Hamilton everything he needed.

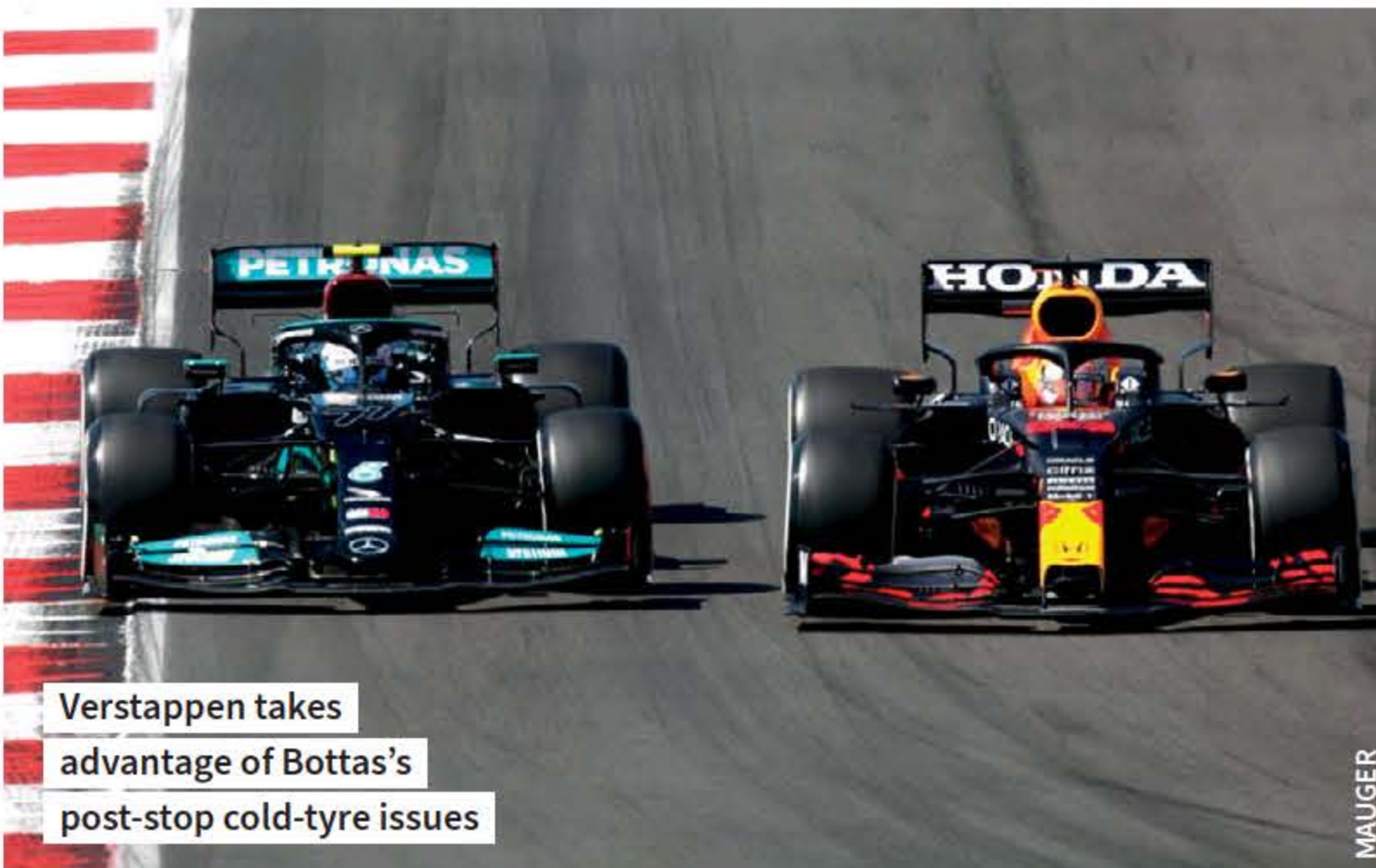
“Lewis was already super-close behind and he got me into Turn 1,” Verstappen said of the pass, in which Hamilton simply took the inside line running down the pitstraight and powered past with the benefit of DRS. It was quite a turnaround from the Red Bull driver, given he had started the previous lap with a look to Bottas’s inside at Turn 1, ratcheting up the pressure. But it was a sign of things to come in regard to Verstappen’s speed in a straight line versus the Black Arrows.

Hamilton’s second test wasn’t quite over, though. Although the Mercedes had swept ahead at Turn 1, Verstappen stayed with him and attacked to the outside of the tight Turn 3 right. But Hamilton simply had to run him out of road on the exit by taking the racing line. This, probably unwise, attempt meant Verstappen was 1.2s adrift by the end of the lap, and Hamilton’s attentions were solely focused on his team-mate’s lead.





Hamilton seizes the lead from struggling Bottas



Verstappen takes advantage of Bottas's post-stop cold-tyre issues

TEST THREE TAKE THE LEAD (PASSED)

Bottas was leading, but he wasn't happy. "I don't know why in the first stint I didn't really have the pace," he later rued. "I mean, I felt everything in terms of the race start, the restart, everything was good from my side, but I could see quite early on in the race that with the mediums I just didn't have pace like Lewis and Max had. I have no idea why."

Although Mercedes couldn't explain in the race's aftermath exactly why Bottas wasn't happy with the mediums the leading trio had started on, it could see that the Finn's problem wasn't consistent. Sometimes he'd be struggling for grip at the front of the car, other times it was the rear threatening to snap away. Whatever was causing the issues, Bottas's lead over Hamilton never grew above a second over the nine laps that followed Hamilton's pass on Verstappen.

But it would be fair to say that Hamilton didn't exactly look comfortable either. Several times he had to saw at his W12's wheel to keep the rear in check, particularly coming through Turn 14's apex. The difference was that he didn't drop back from the leader as a result and was a constant threat, despite the constant dirty air he faced.

"It's just knowledge of the tyres really, and knowing which ones you can lean on and where you can... I can't really say too much, to be honest," he later said, cryptically, before adding: "I think I just managed to get the balance pretty sweet, better for the race than it was for qualifying."

Perhaps it was his inability to pull away from Hamilton that led Bottas to go defensive early when the pass for the lead was upon him. Hamilton crossed the line 0.5s behind his team-mate at the end of lap 19, down from 0.8s the lap before and, although he was closing fast with DRS, he still had a lot to do to take on Bottas with a dive up the inside. But Bottas chose to cover his team-mate a long way before the braking zone and, when it did come time to slam on the brakes, he was a long way to the inside too. Bottas visibly lost momentum as a result of his tight line and Hamilton swept through, serenely taking first on the outside line. >>

QUALIFYING



Bottas took pole in "messy session" for Hamilton

Qualifying at the Algarve Circuit all felt rather... unusual. The low-grip surface, hard and cold tyres, plus the strong wind randomly buffeting the cars created an environment where drivers could go from hero to zero – or the reverse – from lap to lap, segment to segment.

Consider George Russell and Charles Leclerc. Russell scored his best qualifying result with Williams, ending up 11th and just 0.057 seconds from reaching Q3. But he was also just 0.042s away from a Q1 elimination, where Daniel Ricciardo and Lance Stroll were shock fallers, Ricciardo left ruing traffic in his opening runs and a scruffy final sector on his last.

Leclerc brilliantly made it through Q2 on the medium tyres, the only non-Mercedes or Red Bull driver to do so, then ended up qualifying eighth – his lowest grid spot of 2021 so far and slower than team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr – come Q3.

"That is part of the game," Russell said of his Q1 and Q2 near-misses. "I've just not been good enough in those conditions," reflected Leclerc.

Up front, the battle for pole ebbed and flowed across the Mercedes pair and Max Verstappen. Valtteri Bottas, happier with his tyre warm-up work than at Imola, landed an early blow by topping Q1. Come Q2, though, Hamilton crushed his opposition on the mediums, finishing 0.490s clear of Bottas and 0.682s in front of Verstappen, down in fifth at that point.

In the critical final segment, all three had the chance to take pole. Red Bull's pace reignited with the switch back to softs and Verstappen set Q3's fastest time – a 1m18.209s on his first run. But this was deleted

because he had gone beyond the Turn 4 exit kerbs, catching a dramatic oversteer snap Red Bull insisted had actually cost him time. On his second go, he rose to third, 0.398s off pole, annoyed at having to follow Sebastian Vettel's Aston Martin through the final turns.

Bottas led Hamilton by 0.007s after their soft-shod first runs, which were supposed to be banker efforts before pole was decided on the final efforts. Here, Mercedes switched back to the medium, as it had done to lock out the front row in 2020. Both drivers took two final warm-up laps this time, but neither improved and so Bottas's 1m18.348s won pole. "Quite a messy session – I only had one good lap in the whole session," rued Hamilton.

"The whole weekend there has been a so-so feeling with the soft tyres," Bottas explained. "It's been feeling better with the mediums. But maybe the wind picked up in the last run and I couldn't get temperature into them."

"ALL WEEKEND THERE HAS BEEN A SO-SO FEELING WITH THE SOFTS. THE MEDIUMS ARE FEELING BETTER"

Eschewing fastest-lap bid gave Hamilton 30s winning advantage



ETHERINGTON



Hamilton takes a moment to savour his 97th F1 victory

TEST FOUR BUILD A PITSTOP-PASS-PROOF LEAD (PASSED)

Hamilton now had the lead, but he still had just over two thirds of the race to run. It was over the middle third that he really won the event.

In the run-up to the only round of planned pitstops the leaders would make, he edged away from Bottas by nearly 0.2s per lap. It was classic Hamilton – he'd kept his tyres alive despite the strain of having to battle back past a rival and then attack and push on past another. Then, when in clear air, he was able to make the rubber work better than Bottas had managed.

"Lewis is very good at overtaking, he seems to know where to position the car building up to it," Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin said of Hamilton's performance in the race's first half.

"He also doesn't keep trying lap after lap; he will just sit there and then takes the opportunity. But his feel for the tyres I think

is the key to how he manages to sit there and not overheat them and look after them. He has got the same tyres as everyone else, and you damage them by getting them hot – by sliding them. So, the key to it is just keeping them cool and managing the sliding. I think he is just better at it than the others."

Verstappen was 0.7s behind Bottas after Hamilton got through into the lead, and he maintained a similar position until the end of lap 30. Time and time again, Verstappen would close in during the middle sector, only for Bottas to pull out a crucial advantage as they ran through Turns 14 and 15 (merely an acceleration zone leading onto the pit straight) and stay in front on the run down to Turn 1.

"Running in clean air, Max had very good pace – we lacked a bit of straightline speed today," Red Bull team boss Christian Horner said. "It was easier for them to pass us than us to pass them."

On lap 32, Verstappen fell out of Bottas's DRS range again and three laps later, when Red Bull finally pulled the trigger and called him in to start the next key test of Hamilton's race. Verstappen was 5.2s back from the leader and 1.2s off Bottas.

TEST FIVE KEEP UP THE PACE ON HARDER TYRES (PASSED)

Red Bull had come into the race with a new set of hard tyres to deploy for each of its cars, while Mercedes only had slightly scrubbed sets to offer Hamilton and Bottas. Although Pirelli had suggested that a strategy of medium-soft was faster in theory, the white-walled hard rubber emerged as the best race tyre.

But the fresher rubber and the undercut still might not have been enough to get Verstappen ahead of Bottas. Red Bull also needed something of a gift from Mercedes, which it got in the form of a slightly slower stop for Bottas, who lost a second sitting stationary after he'd come in one lap later to cover Verstappen's stop.

Bottas nevertheless exited the pits quite some way ahead of Verstappen, but the delay meant that when he struggled firing the hard



Track limits again a bugbear for Verstappen, costing him fastest lap

SUTTON



Pirellis up to temperature on the smooth, low-grip surface, the Red Bull was close enough to pounce. Both squirmed for grip exiting Turn 3 on Bottas's out-lap, but his slide lasted longer, and Verstappen got a run going through the fast Turn 4 left. That put him on the inside into the Turn 5 hairpin and the move was sealed.

Mercedes immediately brought Hamilton in one lap after his team-mate's stop. The gap between them was 4s at the start of the lap when Bottas pitted, which meant Mercedes could afford to cover Verstappen without inadvertently threatening Hamilton's lead with a Bottas undercut. The benefit of getting the 'better' stop timing was actually the reality of Bottas's pace deficit on the day.

Bottas's out-lap struggles were relayed to Hamilton, but he was under no real threat, as the gap to Verstappen was established at 3.2s. The FP2 long-running had been centred on understanding the mediums – and in Mercedes' case, the softs as well – and so it was somewhat uncertain which team would have the better time on the hards.

Verstappen initially started to trim Hamilton's gap, but a string of fastest laps from the Briton soon reversed the trend and established his successful passing of his final real test, although not at a vastly faster rate. Over the 24 laps that first followed Hamilton's stop, he edged clear at an average of 0.055s per lap.

TEST SIX RESIST THE RISK OF CHASING THE BONUS POINT (PASSED)

Although the fight for the win was over for much of the race's final third, largely thanks to the deficit Verstappen faced after being stuck behind Bottas, one of modern F1's much-debated rules still had a big influence over the rest of proceedings.

Hamilton's efforts in stretching his lead over Verstappen meant he produced a fastest lap of 1m20.933s. Although that was clearly the best time of the three leaders all things being equal, it wasn't going to stand as the race's fastest lap once Red Bull had "focused on wanting

to get to the soft tyre to have a crack at that point for the fastest lap" with Perez, according to Horner.

Perez had seen off Sainz at the restart and then battled past Norris, who had passed both Sainz and Perez on the lap after the safety car came in. By completing a mammoth 51-lap first stint, Perez had cycled into the lead when the top three pitted. Hamilton gently reeled him in, taking the lead back for good with a simple DRS run down the main straight at the start of lap 51, the winner initially confused as to why Perez wasn't being shown blue flags.

Perez's late stop for softs gave him a seemingly simple shot to take the bonus point, which he duly looked to have secured with a 1m20.643s, 11 laps from home. But Mercedes had other ideas.

After a "faulty" exhaust sensor had put Bottas's engine briefly into a protective mode approaching the final 10 laps and, said team boss Toto Wolff, "cost him five seconds" to Verstappen, Mercedes opted to pit him again with three tours to go to take his own set of softs. Wolff later reflected that this was actually "a little bit of a stupid moment", as Mercedes had acted one lap too early and allowed Red Bull to pit Verstappen too, and give him the chance to better Bottas's 1m19.865s on the final tour. Verstappen did, but his 1m19.849s was set after running beyond the kerbs out of Turn 14, which meant it was deleted, much to his frustration.

But Hamilton, who came home nearly 30s in front once his vanquished rivals had pitted to establish a different and lesser game, wisely wasn't interested: "I'd come from third place, so for me it was a solid job and there are days when it's necessary to take the extra risk to take the extra [point], but today wasn't one of those." ❧

NEXT F1 REPORT

SPANISH GRAND PRIX 13 MAY ISSUE

It's straight to Barcelona for round four of the 2021 F1 season – will Red Bull seize back the initiative, or can Bottas take his first win of the year?

Norris is best of the rest again

Although Lando Norris's drive to fifth for McLaren at the Algarve Circuit didn't hit the heights of his Imola podium, he still earned the plaudits for an excellent drive in which he once again headed the midfield.

From seventh on the grid, Norris passed Esteban Ocon at the start, but the Alpine driver dipped back past at the Turn 5 hairpin to reclaim sixth. Norris then made an audacious bid to pass Ocon on the outside of Turn 11, which he duly completed to filter in behind Sergio Perez.

After the safety car, Norris benefited from Carlos Sainz Jr's slow restart, the Ferrari falling behind while Norris cleared Perez's Red Bull at Turn 5, although the Mexican was incensed at Norris gaining ground by going beyond track limits at the previous corner. Norris conceded the place as his soft tyres ailed, later pitting on lap 22 for a set of mediums. Crucially, he kept the life in his medium tyres and was able to maintain the gap to the rising Charles Leclerc behind to cement fifth place.

Team-mate Daniel Ricciardo had a longer road to the points, after starting from 16th following an ignominious Q1 elimination. He was up to 13th by the safety car and battled his way through the order throughout. He looked set for 10th, but Sainz's late fade allowed Ricciardo to double his points tally.



'One of the hardest races' for Russell and Williams

George Russell's hopes of converting his best qualifying for Williams into points were dashed as windy conditions exposed the aero-sensitive nature of the FW43B.

Russell qualified 11th on Saturday, missing Q3 by just 0.057 seconds, and talked up his chances of points in the race thanks to Williams's straightline speed strength (he'd been second fastest at the qualifying speed trap).

But it proved to be a disastrous race, as windy conditions made the peaky FW43B very hard to drive. Russell retained 11th early on, only to be swallowed up on the restart after the safety car, losing three positions on one lap. That set the tone for the rest of Russell's race: he slumped to 16th at the chequered flag, one lap down.

"It was probably the most difficult race we've had since 2019," said Russell. "We know the strengths and we know the weaknesses of our car. It's incredibly sensitive aerodynamically. We saw in qualifying, conditions calmed

down for that Q2 run and the performance was there, as it was in FP1. Then today it was nowhere.

"That is the nature when the car is so sensitive aerodynamically. It gives no confidence to myself or Nicholas [Latifi] to attack on those first laps; we're constantly on the back foot. It was a race of survival, keeping the car on the track as opposed to actually racing. That was one of the hardest races we've ever done."

Sebastian Vettel was another driver to slip back after a strong Saturday, fading from 10th on the grid to finish 13th as Aston Martin failed to keep pace with the other midfield teams.

Team-mate Lance Stroll ran with an update package that didn't yield a noticeable improvement in qualifying, when he was knocked out in Q1. But he recovered to 14th in the race, and was happy with how the car performed over the long runs. Vettel will receive a set of the updates at this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix.

BIG NUMBER

7

The number of positions Carlos Sainz Jr fell after his strong start. He lost the tow to the leaders at the restart and was passed by Sergio Perez, although he did well to avoid hitting the Red Bull when it checked up exiting Turn 1, then lost out to Lando Norris and tumbled down the order on the medium tyres in his second stint.



Distracted Raikkonen admits to crash blunder

Kimi Raikkonen took full responsibility for running into the back of Alfa Romeo team-mate Antonio Giovinazzi after just one lap, saying he was distracted by changing a switch on his steering wheel.

Raikkonen hit the rear of Giovinazzi's car while following the Italian on the main straight at the start of the second lap, leaving the Finn with front-wing damage that ended his race.

"It was my mistake," said Raikkonen. "I was checking something on the steering wheel, changing a switch that I got wrong coming out of the last corner, so I had to change it again and then I just drove into him."

It compounded a miserable day for Alfa Romeo as its bid to overturn Raikkonen's Imola penalty for not pitting after losing places behind the safety car was rejected due to a lack of fresh evidence.



Ocon stars for Alpine as Alonso recovers

Alpine managed a double points finish on a weekend where its pace really picked up, the updates it added at Imola paying off more at the Algarve Circuit.

Esteban Ocon and Fernando Alonso both enjoyed strong race runs to claim a good handful of points in the fiery midfield battle.

Ocon qualified an excellent sixth but dropped to eighth after the safety car, pitting on lap 22 to discard his soft tyres. From there, Ocon had to play the waiting game for the cars ahead to stop before he could filter back into the points, cycling up into seventh and holding station on his hard rubber.

After qualifying 13th, Alonso dropped to 15th on the first lap, but he dug deep and went long on his medium tyres, not stopping until lap 40. On the hard tyres, he had excellent pace and by the end was lapping on par with the leading quartet. He picked his way past Pierre Gasly, Daniel Ricciardo and Carlos Sainz Jr to get into eighth, and finished just a second behind Ocon.

Finishing ahead of the Alpines was Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. After starring in Q2 and wilting in Q3, he'd initially struggled on the mediums as his team-mate did later in the race. He had a stronger second stint on the hard tyre to rise to sixth, but couldn't pressure Lando Norris ahead despite a compound advantage.

Q & A

SERGIO PEREZ RED BULL DRIVER



Fourth is your best result for Red Bull so far. How do you assess it?

A bit messy. Everything started off the line. Everything on my side there wasn't a lot of grip. I went straight into wheelspin, so I lost the position to Carlos. Then I recovered the position after the restart, but then I lost it to Lando down into Turn 5. I looked at my mirrors and I thought Lando was totally off the track limits. Therefore, I didn't fight the position hard enough, thinking that he was going to give me back the place. But I probably misjudged

that one. And it took me a couple of laps to get past Lando and that created the gap to the leaders, that I was basically off the race by that [point].

You ran very long in the first stint – was that a gamble on a safety car?

It was pretty clear that our race was pretty safe from behind so we had nothing to lose at that point. So those are the reasons that the team tried something different. When you give that margin to the cars ahead it is very difficult to recover.

What positives do you take?

The way I drive the car, the understanding I have after

this race of how the car has to be driven in these conditions. Tyre-wise – all of that, different compounds. That is the positive that I take.

Does the team trust you on strategy calls yet?

I don't know the car in race conditions, so I'm not able to give too much information as yet on things we should be trying. I think I'm in that process of adaptation and understanding the team, and understanding the car, before I can really take the team into different directions. The team is pretty solid, and they have done an incredible job in these first few races. So it's me. I need to get on top of the car first and that is coming.



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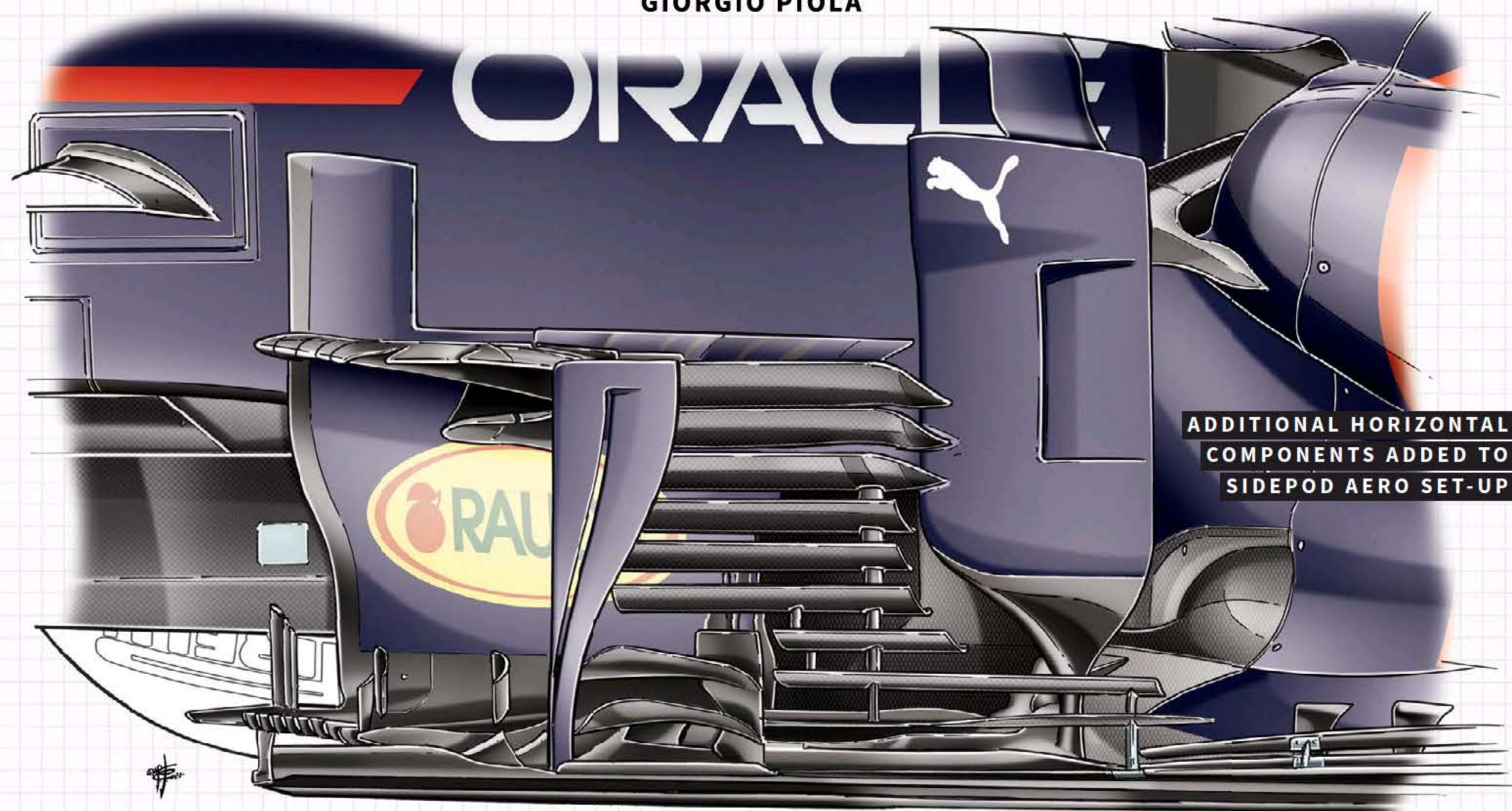


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DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



RED BULL'S SIDEPOD 'VENETIAN BLINDS'

Firmly locked into a title battle, Red Bull threw a number of developments at its RB16B to try to stack the odds in its favour and find some extra performance. The team put together a new bargeboard package for the Portuguese Grand Prix, also bringing a remodelled diffuser and a modified floor to the Algarve Circuit.

The side of the car now looks even more like a set of Venetian blinds, as Red Bull's

aerodynamicists saw fit to increase the quantity of the horizontal components attached to the sidepod-mounted collection of aero devices. These pick up the airflow from the bargeboards and offer the car a little extra downforce, while also assisting with the two vertical elements sandwiching them by cleaning up the airflow directed at the sidepods.

The front vertical part has changed too; Red

Bull has added a lengthy slot down it to break it up. This reduces separation and means the part can divert airflow coming from the bargeboards around a greater radius. Adding the twist to the bottom half also boosts this. The diffuser's central section is also much reduced in size, opening out the rest of the diffuser to build in a bigger volume to boost the amount of downforce it can create.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

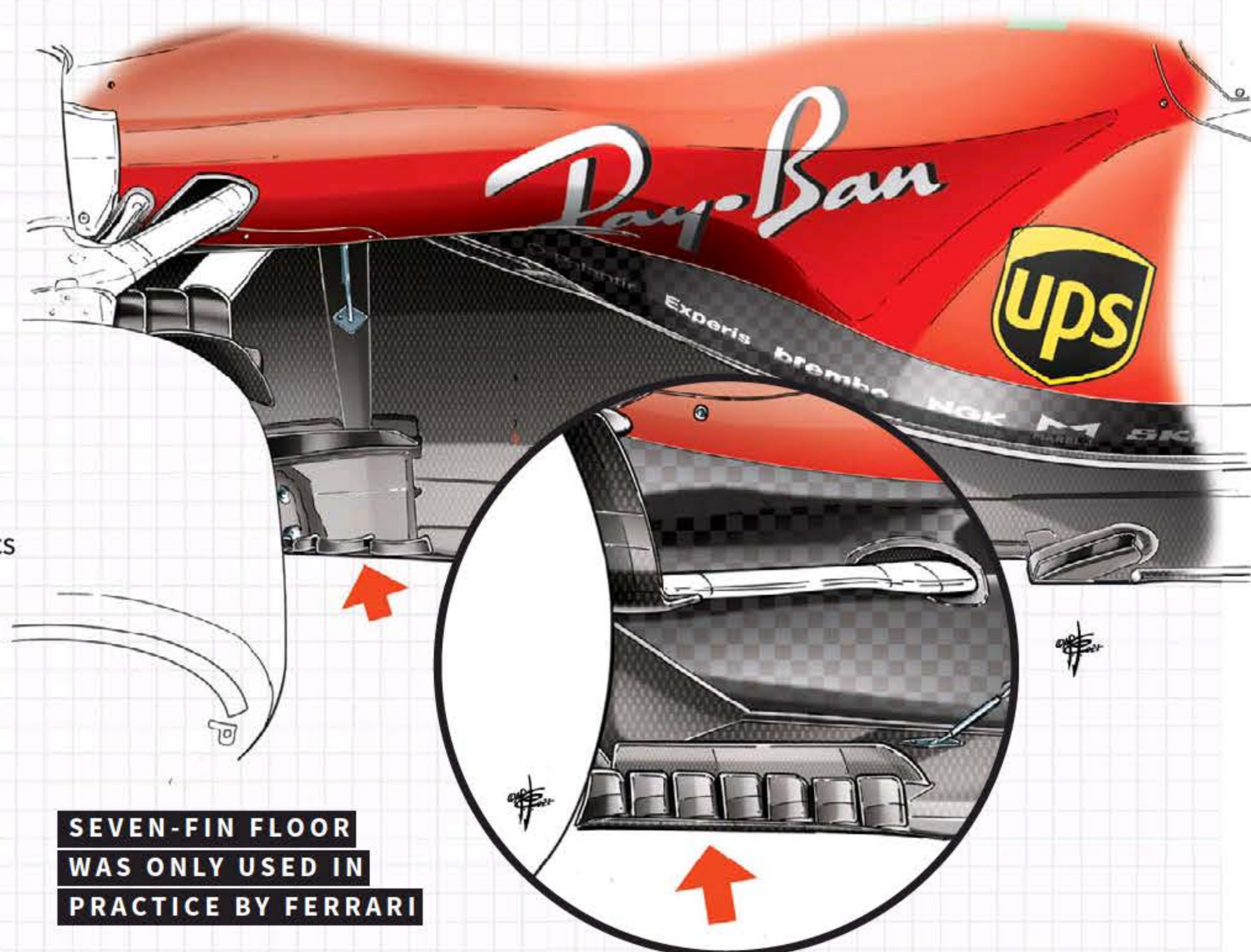
MORE FINS THE MERRIER

Ferrari trialled a new floor in practice in Portugal, but only had one available for the weekend. Hence, in the interests of not showing preferential treatment, neither Charles Leclerc nor Carlos Sainz Jr had access to it for the rest of the weekend.

Previously, the rear corner of the floor had four fins attached to the rear, but the new composition has seven shorter-chord fins to allow for a greater degree of outwash around the rear wheels. These are set next to a small lip, which should allow for an additional bit of flow expansion under the floor, giving the downforce a little bit of a boost.

Naturally, as the teams become used to the characteristics of the 2021 floors, they spot the designs that their rivals have used and implement them within their windtunnel and CFD simulations to see if they can derive the same effect. With other teams using a number of fins at this rear point, Ferrari has upped the ante and tried to almost double its fun with the quantity used. It wouldn't be wholly unsurprising if other teams continued to add more fins to this rear part of the floor – provided, of course, they work with the overall package.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



20 Mazepin #9 1m20.912s		18 Latifi #6 1m20.285s		16 Ricciardo #3 1m19.839s		14 Tsunoda #22 1m19.463s		12 Giovinazzi #99 1m19.216s	
	19 Schumacher #47 1m20.452s		17 Stroll #18 1m19.913s		15 Raikkonen #7 1m19.812s		13 Alonso #14 1m19.456s		11 Russell #63 1m19.109s

FREE PRACTICE 1		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m19.648s
2	Verstappen	1m19.673s
3	Perez	1m19.846s
4	Leclerc	1m19.884s
5	Hamilton	1m19.967s
6	Gasly	1m20.444s
7	Russell	1m20.529s
8	Norris	1m20.635s
9	Sainz	1m20.680s
10	Ocon	1m20.800s
11	Stroll	1m20.894s
12	Ricciardo	1m20.995s
13	Tsunoda	1m21.090s
14	Alonso	1m21.303s
15	Raikkonen	1m21.381s
16	Vettel	1m21.405s
17	Ilott	1m21.806s
18	Schumacher	1m21.939s
19	Latifi	1m22.293s
20	Mazepin	1m24.224s

WEATHER Windy, air 16-18C track 29-35C

FREE PRACTICE 2		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m19.837s
2	Verstappen	1m19.980s
3	Bottas	1m20.181s
4	Sainz	1m20.197s
5	Alonso	1m20.220s
6	Ocon	1m20.235s
7	Leclerc	1m20.360s
8	Ricciardo	1m20.418s
9	Stroll	1m20.427s
10	Perez	1m20.516s
11	Gasly	1m20.558s
12	Norris	1m20.757s
13	Russell	1m20.976s
14	Tsunoda	1m21.053s
15	Vettel	1m21.074s
16	Raikkonen	1m21.225s
17	Giovinazzi	1m21.238s
18	Schumacher	1m21.537s
19	Latifi	1m21.855s
20	Mazepin	1m22.638s

WEATHER Windy, air 17-19C track 38-39C

FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m18.489s
2	Hamilton	1m18.725s
3	Bottas	1m18.820s
4	Perez	1m18.840s
5	Ocon	1m18.860s
6	Leclerc	1m19.001s
7	Sainz	1m19.050s
8	Norris	1m19.272s
9	Gasly	1m19.374s
10	Raikkonen	1m19.415s
11	Tsunoda	1m19.485s
12	Ricciardo	1m19.582s
13	Giovinazzi	1m19.588s
14	Alonso	1m19.949s
15	Schumacher	1m20.033s
16	Stroll	1m20.090s
17	Russell	1m20.127s
18	Vettel	1m20.214s
19	Latifi	1m20.681s
20	Mazepin	1m20.690s

WEATHER Windy, air 16-17C track 28-36C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Hamilton	69	1	1
2	Verstappen	61	1	1
3	Norris	37	3	7
4	Bottas	32	3	1
5	Leclerc	28	4	4
6	Perez	22	4	2
7	Ricciardo	16	6	6
8	Sainz	14	5	5
9	Ocon	8	7	6
10	Gasly	7	7	5
11	Stroll	5	8	10
12	Alonso	5	8	9
13	Tsunoda	2	9	13
14	Raikkonen	0	11	14
15	Giovinazzi	0	12	12
16	Vettel	0	13	10
17	Russell	0	14	11
18	Schumacher	0	16	18
19	Mazepin	0	17	19
20	Latifi	0	18	14

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	101
2	Red Bull	83
3	McLaren	53
4	Ferrari	42
5	Alpine	13
6	AlphaTauri	9
7	Aston Martin	5
8	Alfa Romeo	0
9	Williams	0
10	Haas	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	2	1	Bottas
Perez	1	2	Verstappen
Ricciardo	2	1	Norris
Vettel	1	2	Stroll
Alonso	1	2	Ocon
Leclerc	2	1	Sainz
Gasly	3	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	1	2	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	0	3	Schumacher
Latifi	0	3	Russell

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	2
Verstappen	1

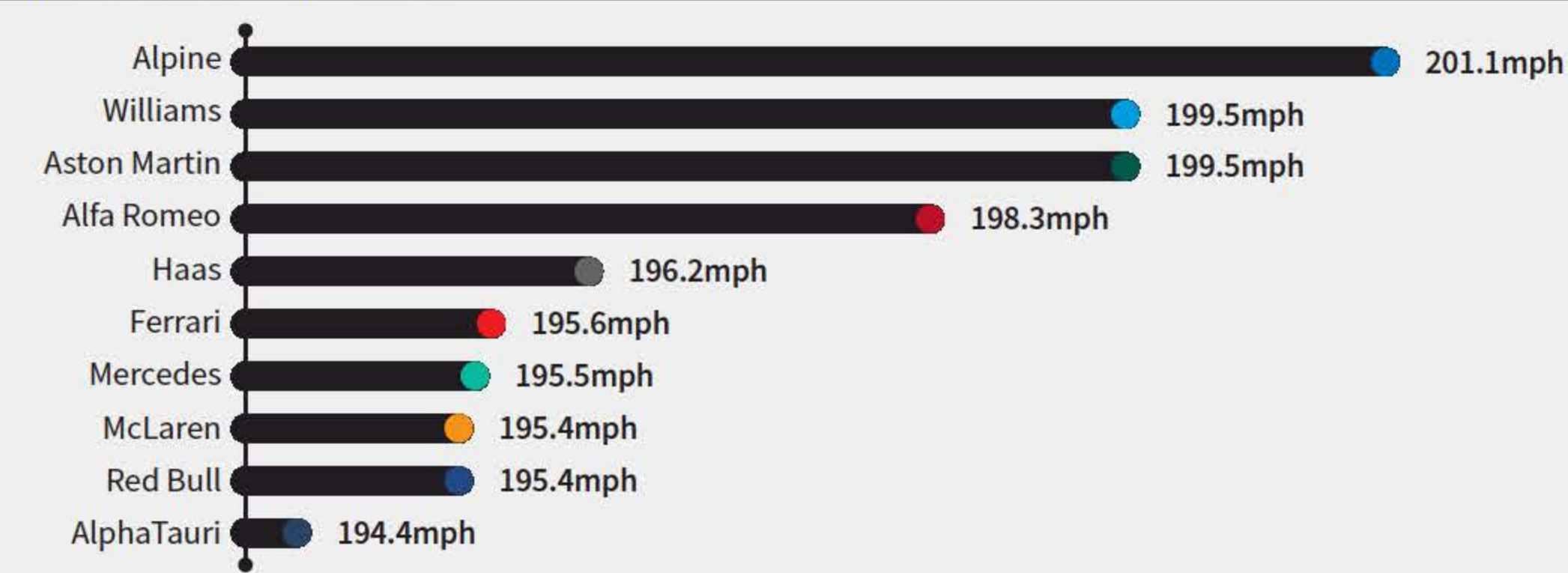
POLE POSITIONS

Bottas	1
Hamilton	1
Verstappen	1

FASTEST LAPS

Bottas	2
Hamilton	1

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m18.722s
2	Norris	1m18.794s
3	Hamilton	1m18.857s
4	Ocon	1m19.092s
5	Sainz	1m19.309s
6	Perez	1m19.337s
7	Leclerc	1m19.373s
8	Vettel	1m19.403s
9	Giovinazzi	1m19.410s
10	Gasly	1m19.464s
11	Verstappen	1m19.485s
12	Tsunoda	1m19.684s
13	Alonso	1m19.728s
14	Raikkonen	1m19.748s
15	Russell	1m19.797s
16	Ricciardo	1m19.839s
17	Stroll	1m19.913s
18	Latifi	1m20.285s
19	Schumacher	1m20.452s
20	Mazepin	1m20.912s

QUALIFYING 2		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m17.968s
2	Bottas	1m18.458s
3	Norris	1m18.481s
4	Ocon	1m18.586s
5	Verstappen	1m18.650s
6	Leclerc	1m18.769s
7	Sainz	1m18.813s
8	Perez	1m18.845s
9	Vettel	1m18.970s
10	Gasly	1m19.052s
11	Russell	1m19.109s
12	Giovinazzi	1m19.216s
13	Alonso	1m19.456s
14	Tsunoda	1m19.463s
15	Raikkonen	1m19.812s

QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m18.348s
2	Hamilton	1m18.355s
3	Verstappen	1m18.746s
4	Perez	1m18.890s
5	Sainz	1m19.039s
6	Ocon	1m19.042s
7	Norris	1m19.116s
8	Leclerc	1m19.306s
9	Gasly	1m19.475s
10	Vettel	1m19.659s

WEATHER Windy, air 17-18C track 34-39C

NEXT RACE
9 MAY
SPANISH GP

Barcelona



STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 3/23 (66 LAPS - 190.66 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h34m31.421s	34	Mu, Hu
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+29.148s		Mu, Hn, Su
3	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+33.530s	19	Mu, Hu, Sn
4	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+39.735s	13	Mu, Su
5	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+51.369s		Su, Mn
6	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+55.781s		Mu, Hn
7	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m03.749s		Su, Hn
8	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	+1m04.808s		Mn, Hn
9	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m15.369s		Mn, Hn
10	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+1m16.463s		Su, Mn
11	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+1m18.955s		Su, Mn
12	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
13	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap		Su, Mu
14	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap		Sn, Mn
15	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
16	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
17	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		Mn, Hn
18	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps		Mn, Hn
19	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		Mn, Hn, Sn
R	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	1 lap-collision		Sn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Bottas	1m19.865s	-	65
2	Perez	1m20.643s	+0.778s	55
3	Verstappen	1m20.695s	+0.830s	62
4	Hamilton	1m20.933s	+1.068s	47
5	Alonso	1m21.032s	+1.167s	66
6	Leclerc	1m21.496s	+1.631s	63
7	Norris	1m21.696s	+1.831s	55
8	Ocon	1m21.886s	+2.021s	34
9	Stroll	1m21.970s	+2.105s	59
10	Ricciardo	1m21.987s	+2.122s	64
11	Gasly	1m22.014s	+2.149s	65
12	Tsunoda	1m22.058s	+2.193s	61
13	Giovinazzi	1m22.167s	+2.302s	60
14	Sainz	1m22.325s	+2.460s	60
15	Vettel	1m22.416s	+2.551s	60
16	Russell	1m22.654s	+2.789s	60
17	Schumacher	1m22.755s	+2.890s	61
18	Latifi	1m23.155s	+3.290s	60
19	Mazepin	1m23.641s	+3.776s	64
20	Raikkonen	no time	-	-

WEATHER Sunny and windy, air 18-19C track 33-40C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 121.02mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 130.33mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

FP1

CALLUM ILOTT replaced GIOVINAZZI at Alfa Romeo

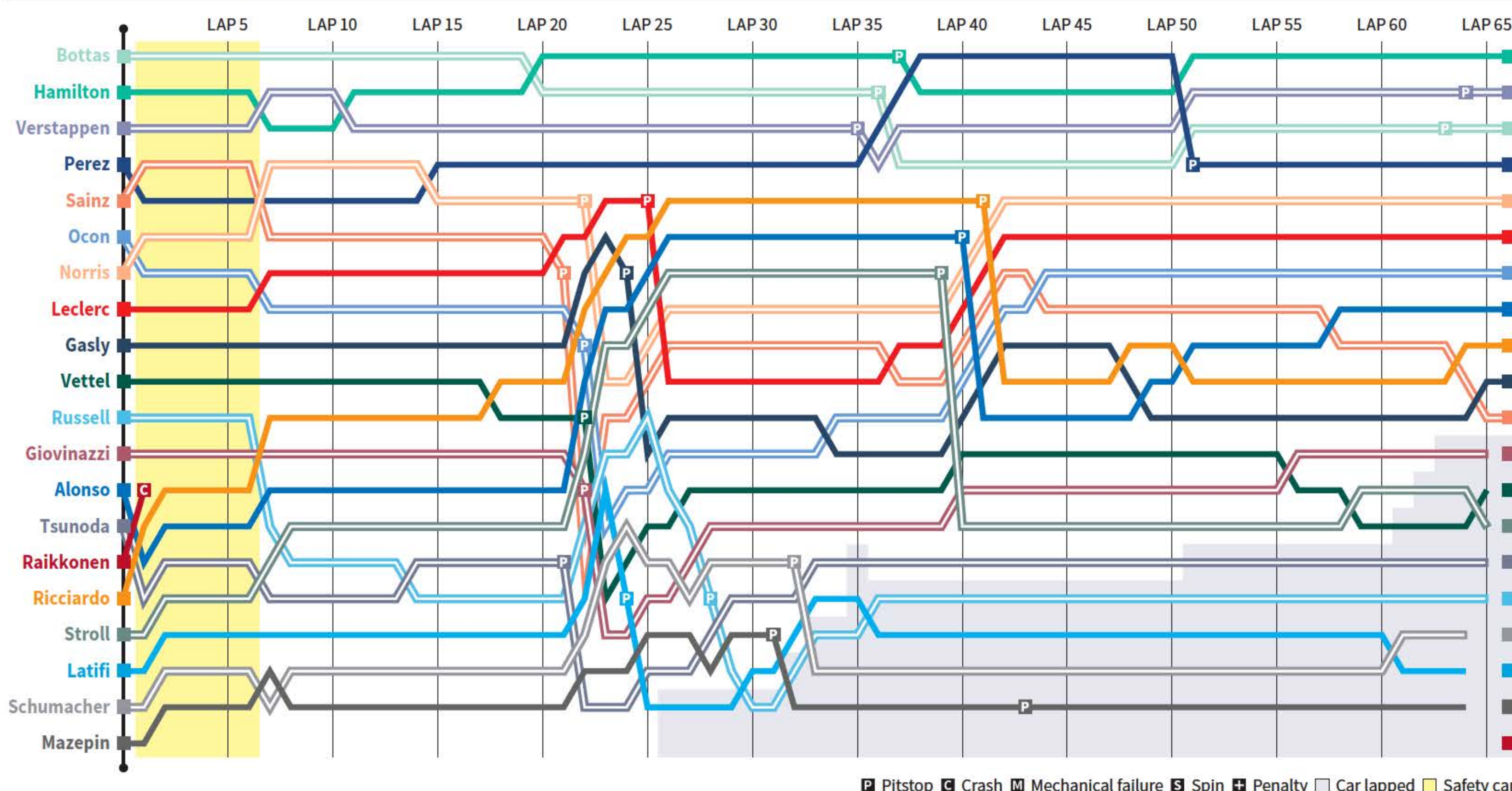
RACE PENALTIES

MAZEPIN Five-second penalty and one licence point for ignoring blue flags

STAT
17

Bottas now has as many world championship F1 poles as three-time champion Jackie Stewart

LAP CHART What happened, when



IT'S HONOURS EVEN FOR OCON AND NORRIS...

...Although between the Algarve's pair of nine-point scorers it's the Alpine driver who comes closest to scooping maximum points

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

8 A vintage Hamilton race display, with a pair of nice passes to seal the lead and his typical tyre-management prowess. But he can't score higher because of his "messy" Q3 laps, which cost him a pole that was there to be taken, and because he screwed up the safety-car restart.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

7 Taking pole redeems him, but there's a sense that Hamilton and Verstappen threw it away rather than Bottas seizing it. Made a good start and nailed the restart, but pace on the mediums was a shade poorer than his rivals. That cost him the lead and a slide on cold hards gave Verstappen a shot.

RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ

6 Qualified fourth, but there was a 0.542s gap to pole. But the main reason for this score is the early stages of the race. He slipped behind Sainz at the start, and Norris at the restart, miffed at the McLaren gaining momentum by going beyond track limits. It meant he was never a factor in the lead fight.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

7 A litany of mistakes produces this score. He had to catch an early Q3 slide through Turn 4 that cost him a pole-sealing lap, which could be forgiven in the wind, but two more slides in the race – both at Turn 14 – cost him a spot to Hamilton and fastest lap.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO

6 Another brilliant race recovery, with his score unable to go higher because of how bad his qualifying was. A messy final sector on his last lap confined him to 16th on the grid. In the race, was quickly gaining places and then extended his first stint nicely, which meant he could attack again late on.



LANDO NORRIS

9 Another excellent result, which contained further proof of his battling prowess – mainly his bold run around the outside of the blind approach to Turns 10/11 to muscle ahead of Ocon on lap one. Qualifying behind Ocon's slower Alpine costs him a maximum score.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

6 Efforts to reach Q3 for the first time in 16 races mean he scores higher, but the race was trying again. Having to start on the softs proved to be costly as he couldn't hold pace with the top 10 once he'd taken the mediums. Getting beaten by Giovinazzi was poor given Aston's pace advantage.



LANCE STROLL

4 This is really down to his Q1 exit and stalled recovery. Wasn't comfortable with the AMR21 in qualifying and felt traffic was costly. Gained ground at restart and pulled off a remarkable 39 laps on the soft tyres, but then couldn't bring a big tyre offset to bear over Giovinazzi in his second stint.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO

7 A great race performance, but this score essentially comes down to his Q2 exit, which he put down to a bad car feeling on low fuel. Lost two places on lap one thanks to his hairpin off, but battled nicely during his late rise with arguably the better Alpine strategy.



ESTEBAN OCON

9 The closest any driver came to a maximum score, largely thanks to impressive Q3 to beat a faster Ferrari and McLaren. Had to repass Gasly after being overcut, and Sainz in the closing stages. Just misses a 10 because his team felt if he'd nailed his first Q3 run he'd have beaten Sainz there too.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

8 Another strong showing overall. His best feat was traversing Q2 on the mediums, which he rued in the race as both Ferraris struggled massively on that rubber. But it meant he had the flexibility to take the hards later on. Underwhelming Q3 to end up behind Sainz and Ocon costs him a higher score.

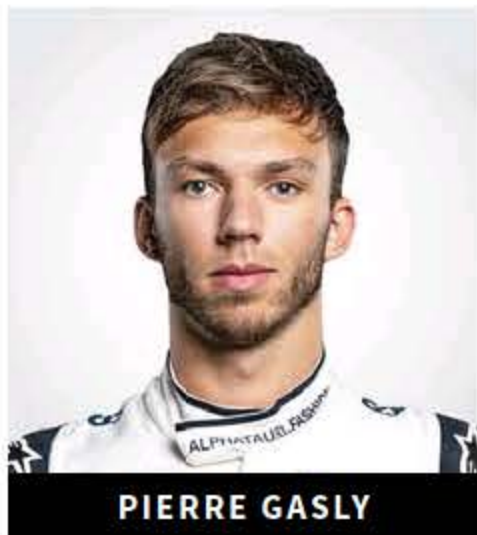


CARLOS SAINZ JR

8 Earns a bonus for beating his rapid team-mate – and Norris – in qualifying. Was also strong in the early stages, racing ahead of Perez at the start. Had a poor safety car restart, but was still strong chasing Norris on the softs. Then the switch to mediums wrecked his race.



ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

7 AlphaTauri was struggling with braking, which Gasly felt really manifested itself in low-speed turns. But he came away with a point as he was able to make the mediums last in a way Sainz couldn't. Marked down because if he'd hooked up his best sectors in qualifying, he'd have beaten both Ferraris.



YUKI TSUNODA

4 Least impressive of his three F1 events to date. Struggled to find a consistent feeling with the car in the race, and had a brief off-track moment catching oversteer at Turn 3 after being lapped late on. Was rather fortunate others messed up in Q1 or he'd likely have been eliminated there.

ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN

2 Fortunate that others messed up Q1 or he'd be on one out of 10. Then came his short, awful race. Alfa needed him to make setting changes at the end of lap one, but he messed it up, tried again, and then got out in Giovinazzi's slipstream, whacking his team-mate and putting himself out.



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

8 The 0.107s gap to Russell in Q2 costs him here, as he just missed out on being the 'Class C' runner to shine against the clock. Survived the clash with Raikkonen and from there spent the race mainly chasing Vettel, getting ahead with 10 laps left with a nice DRS run on the outside into Turn 1.

HAAS



NIKITA MAZEPIN

4 Loses a mark for the blue-flag penalty when being lapped by Perez. Michael Masi made clear this was for the "near-collision that was caused under blue flags", which is pretty sloppy. Had to take an extra stop to make sure he didn't suffer with low tyre temperatures and to avoid more blue flags.



MICK SCHUMACHER

8 Considering the difficulty of excelling in 2021's slowest car, this has to go down as a great result. Beat his team-mate again in qualifying, then beat a faster Williams in the race. Was frustrated he'd been stuck behind Latifi as he reckons he could have threatened Russell too.

WILLIAMS



NICHOLAS LATIFI

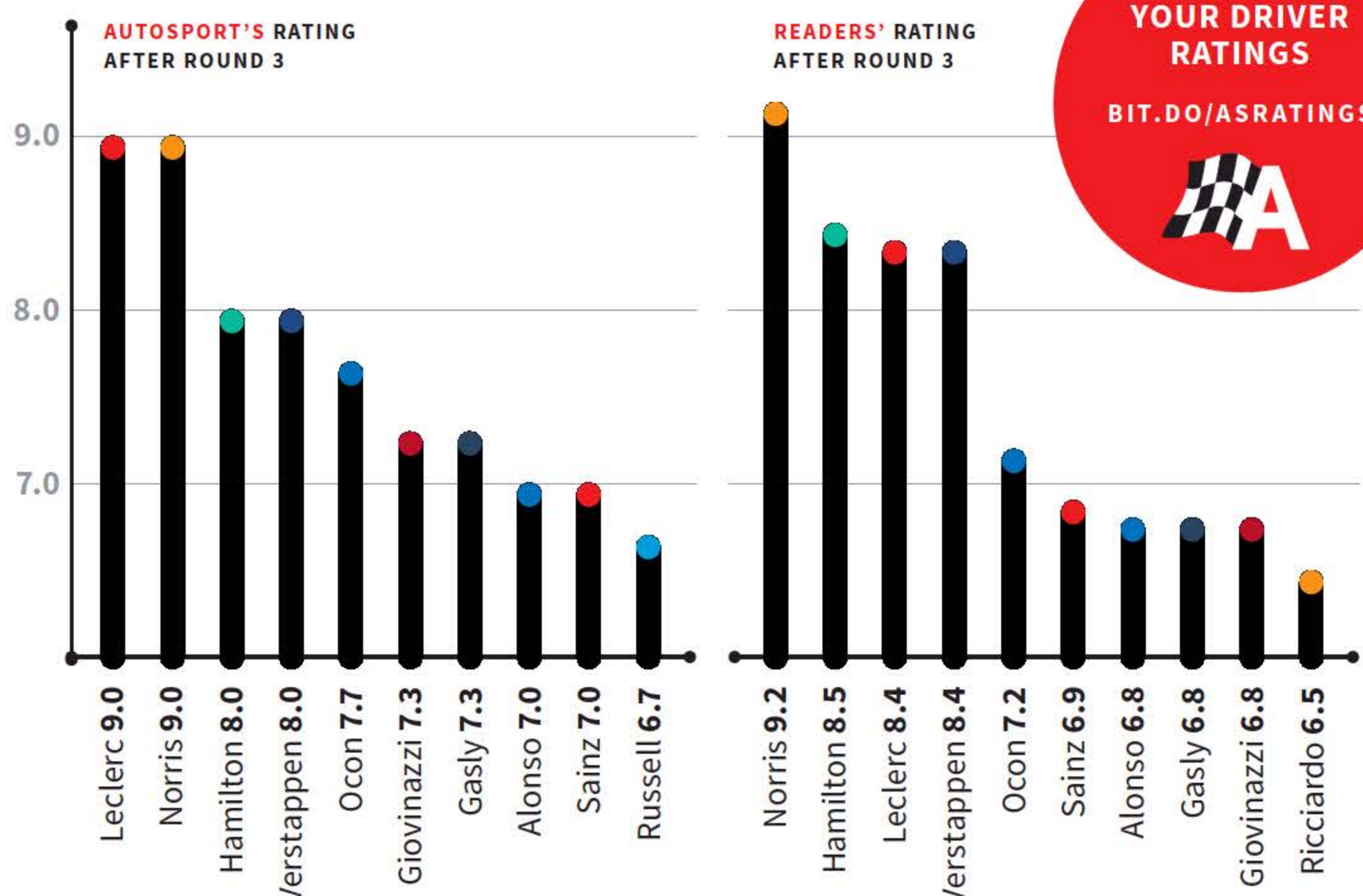
4 Two things really result in this score: Russell showing how high the car can get in qualifying; and because the Briton brought it home in its natural position ahead of the Haases. Latifi failed to do that, gifting Schumacher 17th with a Turn 3 lock-up four laps from home.



GEORGE RUSSELL

7 Earns his high score because of his brilliant Q2 lap, a best-ever Saturday result with Williams. But in the race the car's aero sensitivity in the pack meant he was quickly overcome and was struggling to keep tyre temperature. Briefly fell behind Latifi after their stops, but battled back past.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS





New era, old regime as Toyota scores

*The Hypercar heavy hitters were worried about the LMP2 challenge.
Then the new GR010 claimed pole and the win*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

It was a messy race for Toyota and perhaps a messy start to the Hypercar era for the World Endurance Championship. The Japanese manufacturer won last Saturday's Spa 6 Hours with Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Kazuki Nakajima, but its pair of GR010 HYBRIDS didn't have what might be described as clean races. And the politics that many are predicting will be ever-present in the new formula of top-class prototype racing was never far away.

Toyota triumphed on a day when a pretty straightforward run for the Signatech Alpine squad's grandfathered LMP1 car wasn't enough to overcome two new Le Mans Hypercars that suffered a series of hiccups. Andre Negrao, Nicolas Lapierre and Matthieu Vaxiviere split the GR010s at the chequered flag, but ended up just over a minute behind the #8 car in second place.

The Alpine-Gibson A480, the ORECA design that formerly raced as the Rebellion R-13, would at worst have been right with the winning Toyota, most likely ahead of it, had it been able to go the same distance between refuelling stops. It could do a maximum of 23 laps to the Toyota's 25 (and on one occasion 26), and therefore had to make one extra stop. That has kick-started a debate that for the moment appears nowhere near resolution.

Buemi, Hartley and Nakajima won the 2021 WEC opener in Belgium because they lost less time over the course of the six hours than team-mates Mike Conway, Jose Maria Lopez and Kamui Kobayashi. The winning #8 car had two delays totalling more than 40 seconds for pitlane infractions, whereas #7 spent the better part of a lap beached in the gravel at the Bruxelles hairpin early in the fifth hour and then was handed a drivethrough. There was more time lost at the beginning and end of the race too.



The only loss of time for the Alpine came with a deflating right-front tyre that resulted from Negrao being sideswiped by Tom Blomqvist in one of the Jota ORECA-Gibson 07s as he lunged up the inside of Eau Rouge just after the five-hour mark. The right-front wheel was damaged, but the loss of air pressure was noticed only three corners from the pits and just a couple of laps before he was due to come in anyway. The incident cost the car maybe five or six seconds. Negrao was leading when he pitted, the fifth time in the race that the Alpine had hit the front, but Signatech boss Philippe Sinault knew that victory was a long shot. "When you are in front you start to dream," said Sinault, "but we knew that it wasn't possible to win."

The problem for Alpine is that its chassis can't accommodate as much energy – which means plain old petrol for a non-hybrid car such as the A480 – as it is allowed by the rules. The energy figures, prescribed as a maximum number of megajoules per stint in the Balance of Performance table, are based on the cars achieving 12 laps of the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe at Le Mans. Rebellion typically did 11 laps during last year's 24 Hours, though admittedly with its 4.5-litre Gibson V8 pushing out more power than this season. "We are at maximum capacity," explained Sinault. "It is not possible to put a bigger fuel tank in because the car is homologated like this."

The problem can be traced back to the origins of the car. It was hastily conceived for the 2018-19 WEC superseason as the R-13 and is built around the same monocoque as ORECA's 07 LMP2 prototype. P2s refuelled more often than LMP1s, and disparity in stint length has grown with the introduction of the Hypercar class. "Something has to be done and I hope something can change," said Sinault. "I will try to convince the Automobile Club de l'Ouest [the series promoter and co-writer of the rules with the FIA], but they already know the problem. We want to have the chance of a real





“When you are in front you start to dream, but we knew that it wasn’t possible to win”

victory, not just to be lucky because the other cars have problems.”

Perhaps it was Toyota which had the luck at Spa: its good fortune was that Alpine wasn’t in a position to exploit its problems. “Not a totally great race for us,” said Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon. He reckoned it was “positive to have two cars at the end of the race”, especially since #7 hadn’t turned a wheel at the start of the week. Not so good, he suggested, were the mistakes in the pits.

Buemi had been sent on his way too early at his first pitstop. The rules demand that the refuelling hose remains attached to the car for a minimum of 35s if it has used its full energy allocation (or a percentage of 35s if it hasn’t), but the refueller pulled up the nozzle the moment the fuel had stopped going in, as was the procedure in LMP1 days. The mistake resulted in a penalty of 36.4s taken at the next pitstop. The figure was derived, as per the regulations, by multiplying the time gained by four and adding another five. A second penalty of 5s was subsequently accrued by the car for an unsafe release.

The #7 Toyota also had problems in the pits early on: it was slow away at its first stop, and then needed a top-up of gearbox oil at its second. Conway had led the initial going, before being told to cede position to Buemi after only 10 laps. Toyota’s strategy book always calls for the faster car to be allowed through, though the Swiss only put a second and a half on his team-mate before the pitstops began.

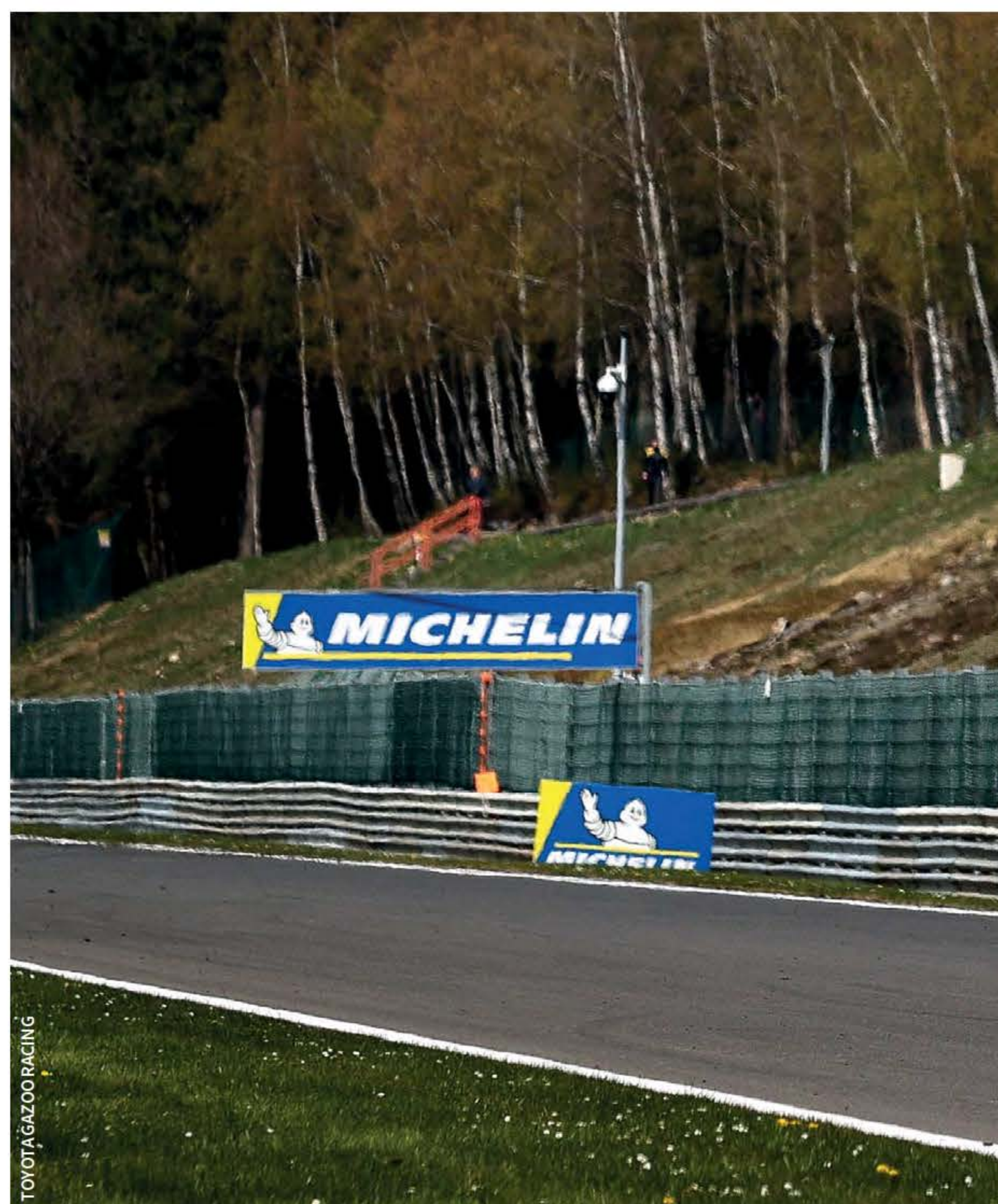


The gap was about the same when the #8 took its refuelling penalty, which dropped Hartley 15 or so seconds behind Lopez. That gap had increased to nearly half a minute by the halfway mark. The #7 car looked pretty much home and dry from the outside, but inside the car the drivers were having to deal with what Vasselon described as “a sensitivity on front-wheel locking”. The problem was implicated in a tangle at the Bus Stop between Lopez and Richard Lietz in the #91 GTE Pro class Porsche some time before Kobayashi got caught out at Bruxelles. “We were struggling with the front end a little bit, but we still had good pace,” said the Japanese. “Then the fronts locked up and I couldn’t unlock them – I don’t know why.”

Kobayashi went across the asphalt runoff and into the smallest of gravel traps. The Toyota was unable to reverse out, and needed a tow from a course vehicle. With the delay went any chance of the reigning world champions beginning the defence of their title >>



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with a victory. Conway and co finished a lap down at the finish after Kobayashi had to take a drivethrough for Lopez's earlier misdemeanour and then briefly stopped on the Les Combes escape road to undertake a reset of the electronics.

One team that did begin its attempt to retain a crown in style was United Autosports in LMP2, which it led for every lap bar five during pitstop sequences. Its ORECA-Gibson 07 driven by Filipe Albuquerque, Phil Hanson and Fabio Scherer stood head and shoulders over the rest of the field at Spa. It topped the times – the overall times – in two of the four sessions of the pre-event Prologue test (and the class order in another), and was quickest P2 throughout the meeting proper, Albuquerque ending up on pole by more than half a second.

The team was paid a compliment by Vasselon after the race. He said, only half in jest, that Toyota had competitors from three categories last weekend: grandfathered LMP1, United Autosports, and LMP2. Toyota's technical boss had been outspoken about the pace of the P2s throughout the week. Despite a series of measures designed to ensure that they are slower than the Hypercars – a reduction of 65bhp, an increase of 20kg, and the requirement to run low-downforce Le Mans aero at all races – three P2s bested Toyota in the two-day Prologue on Monday and Tuesday of race week.





Winning Toyota speeds
through Ardennes woods

Toyota called for an immediate change to restore a proper gap between the top two classes of the WEC. The ACO and the FIA ruled out any changes for Spa during a press conference on Wednesday, though Thierry Bouvet, the ACO's technical director, explained there would be what he described as a "correction" to the BoP tables for Hypercar.

'Correction' was actually the wrong word. What the ACO and the FIA did – and their actions only fully emerged after the race – was to give the Hypercars a bit more power. The rules include an atmospheric coefficient so there is no disadvantage to running a normally aspirated engine at altitude: the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps sits at approximately 600m in the Ardennes mountain range. This was removed ahead of the start of the meeting. Toyota gained 18kW or 24bhp, and Gibson was able to tweak its restricted V8 in the Alpine upwards by the same amount.

“Toyota called for an immediate change to restore a proper gap between the top two classes”

Vasselon explained that the power hike was worth 0.55s per lap.

Toyota wasn't suggesting that it was likely to be beaten by the best of the P2s given a reliable run from either of the GR010s, rather that there needs to be a clear gap between the categories, no matter the state of the tyres the cars are on or the fuel load they are running. 'Class stratification' was the fancy term being bandied about the paddock.

United was predictably closest of the P2s to the Hypercars in the race as champions Albuquerque and Hanson, and sportscar rookie Scherer swept to a dominant victory. The car was still a minute down on the #7 Toyota at the finish, but Hanson did ever so briefly get in front of both GR010s at the start. He was ahead out of La Source, but before Eau Rouge he was pushed down to second by Conway in the Toyota that Kobayashi had qualified on pole, and Buemi passed him before Les Combes.

There's not a lot to say about United's run to a fifth WEC class victory – or a fifth in six attempts since its first in Bahrain at the >>

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end of 2019. Hanson's fastest lap in class probably deserves a mention, as does his composure when he faced a brief challenge from Giedo van der Garde in the Racing Team Nederland ORECA. Silver-rated Scherer, it must be said, looked impressive on his P2 debut and was only half a second down on his team-mates on a 25-lap average. As for Albuquerque, all the superlatives have probably already been used over the past year or so.

It's probably also worth recording that United has quickly got to grips with the one-make Goodyear tyres after a couple of seasons on Michelins. It did run the Goodyears at the European Le Mans Series opener at Barcelona last month, but not the 2021 C-spec tyre on which everyone ran at Spa.

The United car would have been even further ahead but for two penalties: a 5s hold for an unsafe release in the pits, and a drivethrough for an FCY infraction. Albuquerque even made a mistake — a quick trip across the runoff at the Bus Stop — as the race drew to a close, but such was United's dominance that it still finished a lap up on its nearest pursuer.

Jota came through to take second and third with its two ORECAs, team regulars Anthony Davidson, Antonio Felix da Costa and Roberto Gonzalez beating the sister car of Stoffel Vandoorne, Tom Blomqvist and Sean Gelael home by 12s. Davidson, da Costa and Gonzalez had to fight back from an early delay. Gonzalez was hit up the rear at the start, which

“The United car would have been even further ahead but for two penalties”



resulted in the car losing vital seconds when the rear deck was replaced at the first pitstop. Davidson had been ahead of Blomqvist when he took a drivethrough for an FCY infringement, before the positions were reversed when his fellow countryman was pinged for the incident with the Alpine.

The best of the Aurus-badged G-Drive ORECAs run by Algarve Pro had looked set for second in the hands of Nyck de Vries, Roman Rusinov and Franco Colapinto until it retired with an oil leak at the prompting of race control. The team had been topping up the car at every stop until then.

The TDS Racing-run RTN ORECA in which Job van Uitert and Frits van Eerd joined van der Garde was the fourth P2 car home, a lap down on the Jota cars. That gave it the top step of the podium in the new Pro-Am sub-class. ❧

ESTRE SUPREME IN GTE FOR PORSCHE

Kevin Estre was in imperious form for Porsche at Spa. He and new team-mate Neel Jani dominated GTE Pro last weekend aboard their Manthey-run 911 RSR on the way to a half-minute victory, but the star of the day insisted it wasn't as easy as it looked.

Estre had been quickest in the #92 Porsche in three of the four sessions of the Prologue test and two of the three practice periods, and then blitzed qualifying with a time over a second clear of his nearest rival. He actually put in two laps good enough for the pole. In the race he cleared off at the start, pulling a gap of 25s over the chasing AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo of Alessandro Pier Guidi during the course of his opening double stint.

That double came to an early end courtesy of a right-rear puncture, the same problem that had already afflicted the sister car with Richard Lietz at the wheel. That was when, reckoned Estre, it all got “extremely stressful”.



First, there was the worry about what was causing the tyre issues, which resulted in the team going up on the pressures and the drivers trying to stay off the kerbs where possible. Of greater concern was the possibility of a late splash after the early stop.

Jani increased the #92 Porsche's lead initially but, as he went into fuel-save mode on his second stint on a set of Michelins, James Calado

in the chasing Ferrari came back at him, halving the lead to 12 or so seconds. A full course yellow (FCY) virtual safety car late in the fourth hour allayed Estre's and Jani's fears that they would lose the victory with a splash. The five GTE Pro runners all took advantage of the yellows to stop, putting everyone on the same fuel strategy.

Pier Guidi and Calado finished a distant second, though the result

didn't come as a surprise to the Italian marque. The Balance of Performance had been left more or less where it was save for some amendments to reflect the disappearance of the Aston Martin Vantage GTEs and the introduction of a new blend of fuel from Total. Ferrari trailed Porsche at the back end of last season, so wasn't expecting anything different now.

Reigning GTE Am champions Francois Perrodo and Nicklas Nielsen started the defence of their crown with a victory, though it was new team-mate Alessio Rovera who anchored the win in their AF Ferrari. By the time the Italian had handed over to Nielsen for the final couple of hours, the heavy lifting had been done.

Ben Keating starred in the early stages in the TF Sport Aston before being forced onto the grass by a couple of squabbling P2s. He and new team-mates Felipe Fraga and Dylan Pereira came home second, 44s in arrears of the Ferrari.

RESULTS ROUND 1/6, SPA 6 HOURS (BEL), 1 MAY (162 LAPS – 705.028 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Kazuki Nakajima (JPN) Brendon Hartley (NZL)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	6h00m17.733s
2	Andre Negrao (BRA) Nicolas Lapierre (FRA) Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA)	Alpine Elf Matmut (Signatech)	Alpine-Gibson A480	Hypercar	+1m07.196s
3	Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	-1 lap
4	Phil Hanson (GBR) Fabio Scherer (CHE) Filipe Albuquerque (PRT)	United Autosports USA	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-1 lap
5	Roberto Gonzalez (MEX) Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT) Anthony Davidson (GBR)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
6	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL) Sean Gelael (IDN) Tom Blomqvist (GBR)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
7	Giedo van der Garde (NLD) Frits van Eerd (NLD) Job van Uiter (NLD)	Racing Team Nederland (TDS)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-3 laps
8	Alex Brundle (GBR) Jakub Smiechowski (POL) Renger van der Zande (NLD)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-3 laps
9	Esteban Garcia (CHE) Loic Duval (FRA) Norman Nato (FRA)	Realteam Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4 laps
10	Juan Pablo Montoya (COL) Henrik Hedman (SWE) Ben Hanley (GBR)	DragonSpeed USA	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4 laps
11	Beitske Visser (NLD) Tatiana Calderon (COL) Sophia Florsch (DEU)	Richard Mille Racing Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4 laps
12	Anders Fjordbach (DNK) Jan Magnussen (DNK) Dennis Andersen (DNK)	High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-5 laps
13	John Falb (USA) Rui Andrade (PRT) Roberto Merhi (ESP)	G-Drive Racing (Algarve Pro)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-5 laps
14	Patrick Kelly (USA) Gabriel Aubry (FRA) Simon Trummer (CHE)	PR1 Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-5 laps
15	Kevin Estre (FRA) Neel Jani (CHE)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-9 laps
16	Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Pro	-9 laps
17	Miguel Molina (ESP) Daniel Serra (BRA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Pro	-9 laps
18	Antonio Garcia (ESP) Oliver Gavin (GBR)	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTE Pro	-10 laps
19	Richard Lietz (AUT) Gianmaria Bruni (ITA)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-10 laps
20	Francois Perrodo (FRA) Nicklas Nielsen (DNK) Alessio Rovera (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-10 laps
21	Ben Keating (USA) Dylan Pereira (LUX) Felipe Fraga (BRA)	TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-10 laps
22	Roberto Lacorte (ITA) Giorgio Sernagiotto (ITA) Antonio Fuoco (ITA)	Cetilar Racing (AF Corse)	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-11 laps
23	Thomas Flohr (CHE) Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Giancarlo Fisichella (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-11 laps
24	Andrew Haryanto (IDN) Marco Seefried (DEU) Alessio Picariello (BEL)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-11 laps
25	Paul Dalla Lana (CAN) Augusto Farfus (BRA) Marcos Gomes (BRA)	Aston Martin Racing (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-11 laps
26	Tomonobu Fujii (JPN) Satoshi Hoshino (JPN) Andrew Watson (GBR)	D'Station Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-12 laps
27	Manuela Gostner (ITA) Rahel Frey (CHE) Katherine Legge (GBR)	Iron Lynx	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-12 laps
28	Claudio Schiavoni (ITA) Andrea Piccini (ITA) Matteo Cressoni (ITA)	Iron Lynx	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-13 laps
29	Robin Frijns (NLD) Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Charles Milesi (FRA)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-35 laps
R	Matt Campbell (AUS) Christian Ried (DEU) Jaxon Evans (NZL)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	138 laps-electronics
R	Roman Rusinov (RUS) Franco Colapinto (ARG) Nyck de Vries (NLD)	G-Drive Racing (Algarve Pro)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	125 laps-oil leak
R	Miro Konopka (SVK) Tom Jackson (GBR) Darren Burke (GBR)	ARC Bratislava	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	0 laps-fuel leak
R	Michael Wainwright (GBR) Ben Barker (GBR) Tom Gamble (GBR)	GR Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	0 laps-accident
NS	Matteo Cairolì (ITA) Egidio Perfetti (NOR) Riccardo Pera (ITA)	Team Project 1	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	accident
NA	Dennis Olsen (NOR) Axcil Jefferies (ZWE) Anders Buchardt (NOR)	Team Project 1	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	accident in Prologue

Winners' average speed 117.408mph. **Fastest lap** Buemi 2m03.930s, 126.420mph. In each car, first-named driver started race.

LMP2 Hanson 2m05.605s, 124.734mph. **GTE Pro** Estre 2m13.658s, 117.219mph. **GTE Am** Rovera 2m14.111s, 116.823mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Kobayashi 2m00.747s; **2 Nakajima** 2m01.266s; **3 Albuquerque** 2m02.404s; **4 Lapierre** 2m02.652s; **5 de Vries** 2m02.984s; **6 van der Garde** 2m03.435s; **7 Nato** 2m03.475s; **8 Merhi** 2m03.485s; **9 Vandoorne** 2m03.516s; **10 Davidson** 2m03.625s; **11 Hanley** 2m03.816s; **12 Aubry** 2m03.869s; **13 Frijns** 2m03.915s; **14 Brundle** 2m04.207s; **15 Calderon** 2m05.284s; **16 Fjordbach** 2m05.522s; **17 Burke** 2m07.051s; **18 Estre** 2m11.219s; **19 Molina** 2m12.351s; **20 Lietz** 2m12.370s; **21 Pier Guidi** 2m12.443s; **22 Garcia** 2m13.106s; **23 Keating** 2m14.660s; **24 Dalla Lana** 2m15.615s; **25 Haryanto**

2m16.319s; **26 Flohr** 2m16.367s; **27 Perrodo** 2m17.560s; **28 Lacorte** 2m17.719s; **29 Gostner** 2m18.452s; **30 Wainwright** 2m18.813s; **31 Schiavoni** 2m20.356s; **32 Ried** no time; **33 Hoshino** no time; **34 Perfetti** no time.
CHAMPIONSHIP
Hypercar drivers
1 Hartley/Nakajima/Buemi 25; **2 Negrao/Vaxiviere/Lapierre** 18; **3 Lopez/Kobayashi/Conway** 16.
Hypercar manufacturers
1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 26; **2 Alpine Elf Matmut** 18.
LMP2 drivers
1 Scherer/Albuquerque/Hanson 26;

2 Davidson/da Costa/Gonzalez 18; **3 Gelael/Vandoorne/Blomqvist** 15; **4 van Eerd/van der Garde/van Uiter** 12.
LMP2 Pro-Am drivers
1 van Eerd/van der Garde/van Uiter 25; **2 Garcia/Duval/Nato** 18; **3 Hanley/Hedman/Montoya** 15; **4 Fjordbach/Andersen/Magnussen** 12.
GTE drivers
1 Estre/Jani 26; **2 Pier Guidi/Calado** 18; **3 Serra/Molina** 15; **4 Bruni/Lietz** 12; **5 Rovera/Perrodo/Nielsen** 10; **6 Keating/Pereira/Fraga** 8.
GTE manufacturers
1 Porsche 38; **2 Ferrari** 33.



GTE Am drivers

1 Rovera/Perrodo/Nielsen 25; **2 Keating/Pereira/Fraga** 19; **3 Fuoco/Sernagiotto/Lacorte** 15; **4 Castellacci/Fisichella/Flohr** 12.



Dixon dominant before O'Ward takes his chance

The six-time champion was head-and-shoulders above the rest in the first race on the Texas oval, then the next day it was the turn of a rising star to score his maiden IndyCar victory

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

Scott Dixon was untouchable in the opening race at Texas Motor Speedway last weekend, dominating in a manner that isn't supposed to happen in IndyCar oval races. But the following day, after looking unbeatable for half of race two, the Chip Ganassi Racing driver became vulnerable due to the way the yellows fell and the fact that his rivals stacked themselves behind him to save fuel in the penultimate stint. Shuffled back to fourth following the final round of pitstops, he couldn't break into the podium places, and instead swashbuckling Pato O'Ward slashed past Josef Newgarden to grab his very first series victory.

With the grid for both races set by

championship points due to rain cancelling qualifying, Dixon lined up third for race one behind Chip Ganassi Racing team-mate Alex Palou and Team Penske's Will Power. But he moved ahead of Power at the drop of the green flag, and went around the outside of Palou at the start of lap three. Aside from the first pitstop sequence, when Palou went a couple of laps longer, Dixon never relinquished the lead thereafter. Of the 212 laps, the #9 sat at the top of the lap charts for 206 of them.

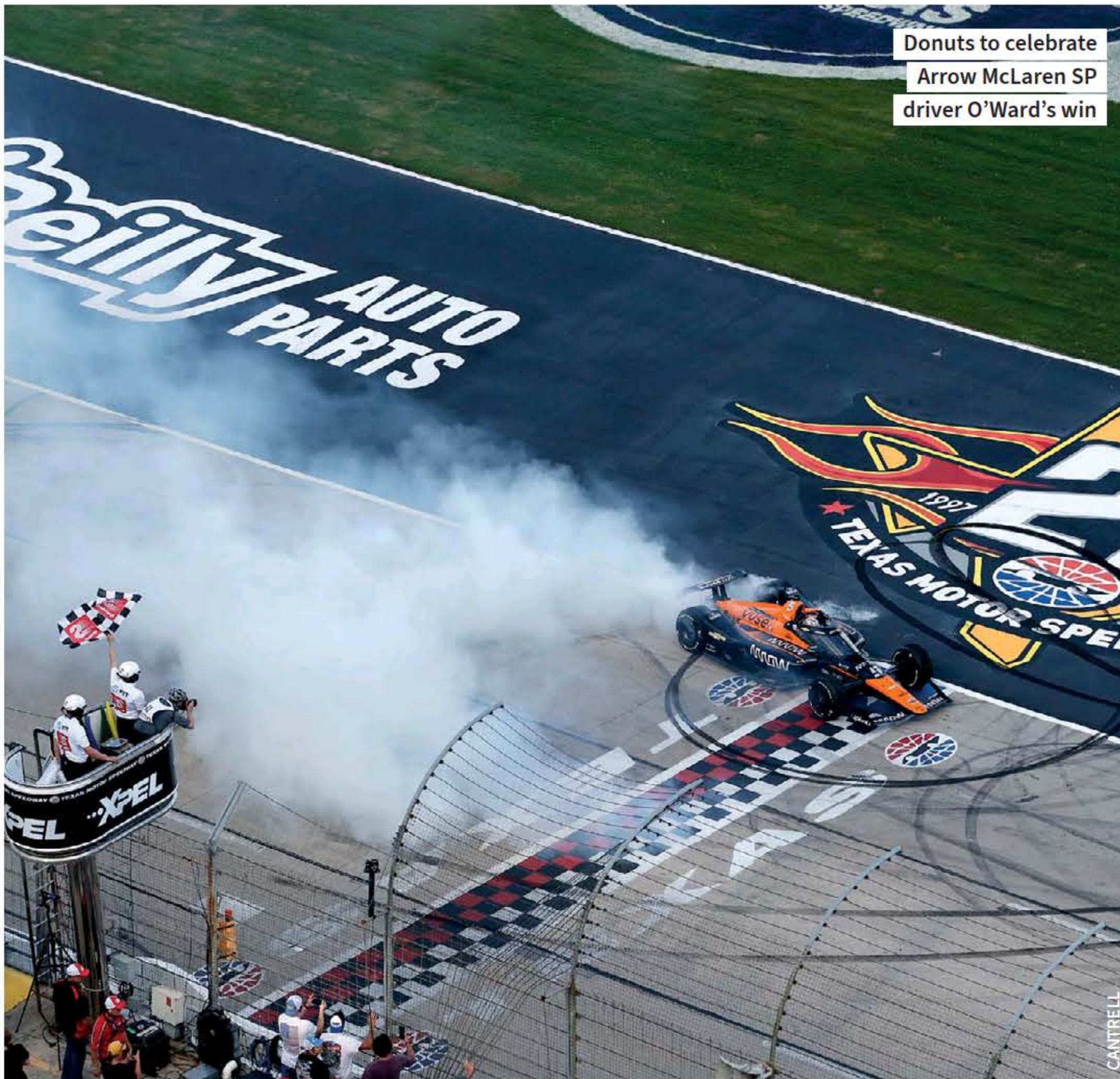
With his fifth victory at the 1.5-mile oval outside Fort Worth, Dixon became the first IndyCar driver to score back-to-back wins there, clocked his 19th year of scoring at least one victory in the top flight of American single-seaters, and drew within

one win of Mario Andretti's tally of 52 – second in the all-time list behind AJ Foyt.

All but one of Dixon's wins have come with Chip Ganassi's team and, asked about his remarkable stats, the six-time and reigning IndyCar champion was modesty personified.

"They sound amazing. I never thought I'd be in this position. I had big dreams obviously, would always dream about winning an Indycar championship or something along those lines. But... between how you dream and reality can be very different many times."

"Chip and I spoke just after this race. 'He was like, 'Man, congrats on the 19 [winning] seasons.' I was like, 'Without you, this wouldn't be possible, so thank you.' That



goes for every member on this team. It's a lot of people. My wife, my family. These moments for me make it feel that much better because of the effort that a lot of people put into my programme, even when I was in junior categories, to now.

"It feels amazing to be in this position. You just never want it to end..."

His rivals did, and they will have rolled their eyes when they realised that the win sent Dixon to the top of the points table and therefore handed him pole position for the second race.

"Like he needs that help," sighed an engineer from a rival team on Sunday morning. "I understand IndyCar focusing on practice yesterday instead of qualifying when the rain came. Drivers – and us! – need to know what the cars are like in traffic. But they could have run a qualifying session for today's race. Instead, it's on points, and if you started low down the grid yesterday, you finished low down, so you didn't improve much in the championship, so you're screwed again today. This track just doesn't produce much passing any more."

Most of the blame is placed on the long dark patch of 'PJ1' swathed across Turns 1 and 2, which is said to increase grip for NASCAR cars in their current aerodynamic configuration, but has the opposite effect on 220mph open-wheel machines.

"It's like ice, especially on old tyres," said one driver. "The problem isn't just that you can't run two-wide through there. It's that

you can't vary your line to get a run on a car in front down the back straight."

There were exceptions, but generally that was the case on Saturday evening – it was all about track position. A foul-up in the pits or a slow in and/or out-lap could be very costly, as was staying out too long on worn-out tyres, lapping 10mph slower than those on fresh rubber. But pitting under green-flag conditions just before a caution period was similarly devastating.

That's what cost Power and team-mate Simon Pagenaud – running third and sixth before the first round of stops – a chance of a podium finish in the first encounter. They stopped on laps 55 and 54 respectively, and on lap 56 the yellow flew when Sebastien Bourdais slowed his AJ Foyt Racing Dallara-Chevrolet in response to Andretti Autosport's leading contender Colton Herta braking for the pitlane. Newgarden's Penske car tapped the Foyt machine into a spin that sent Bourdais hard, rear on into the SAFER barrier. All those who hadn't yet stopped effectively got a 'free' pitstop with the field slowed behind the pace car, and Power and Pagenaud found themselves down in 12th and 15th. Newgarden, meanwhile, was moved to the back of the field for causing the contact.

Those who benefited were Herta and Jack Harvey of Meyer Shank Racing. They had run fourth and fifth from the start and now moved up one place. But more radically, Andretti Autosport's Alexander Rossi, Penske's Scott McLaughlin, Ed Carpenter >>

McLAUGHLIN PROVES HE'S A FAST LEARNER



The problem with starring in the first race of a double-header but struggling in the second is that your glory hasn't lasted long. But nothing should take away from what Scott McLaughlin achieved last weekend in Texas.

By completing a New Zealand 1-2 in the first race – just a quarter-second behind one of his heroes, Scott Dixon – he also upheld Penske honour on a night when the team's other three cars suffered a technical problem (Will Power), strategic misfortune (Power and Simon Pagenaud) and a penalty (Josef Newgarden).

"It's a big thing taking on my first oval race," said the three-time Australian Supercars champion. "Just tried to get through the first few laps. I was pretty cautious – probably too cautious in my first stint. Just sort of worked up to it. I managed to dodge the Bourdais wreck, which was pretty close for me. Then the Hinchcliffe one, which put us right there."

"It's definitely the most happy I've ever been finishing second... I've worked very hard behind the scenes looking at footage, talking to my team-mates about where we can get better. I'm really proud to have been able to deliver tonight when I needed to. The boys on the team put me in position. I was able to deliver. That's what I'm really proud of."

The following day's reality check still resulted in an eighth place, but he's tough on himself.

"These veterans are very quick at getting into their pace. For me, it just takes some time to get comfortable and feel out the track conditions... My two restarts were terrible."

He'll learn. Heck, look how fast he's learned already, in just five races.



Racing's Rinus VeeKay and Jimmie Johnson's supersub on ovals, Tony Kanaan — up from the back row! — were filling out the top eight. TK would depose VeeKay on the restart.

The second round of pitstops came under green-flag conditions and the order shuffled again. Dixon resumed in the lead but Palou went four laps longer and emerged fourth. Up to second was the Arrow McLaren SP car of Felix Rosenqvist, who had stopped a full 10 laps earlier than Palou (his replacement at Ganassi) and had been clocking mighty fast laps in clean air. He was now ahead of the new third-placed driver McLaughlin, Palou and the second Arrow McLaren SP machine of O'Ward.

But after Rosenqvist went on the outside of James Hinchcliffe's Andretti Autosport car to lap him, he then swung back down to avoid hitting the PJ1 patch. That robbed the Canadian of clean air, and Hinchcliffe pushed up into the 'black ice', looped into a spin and struck the wall, bringing out the second caution.

The timing was perfect for the final

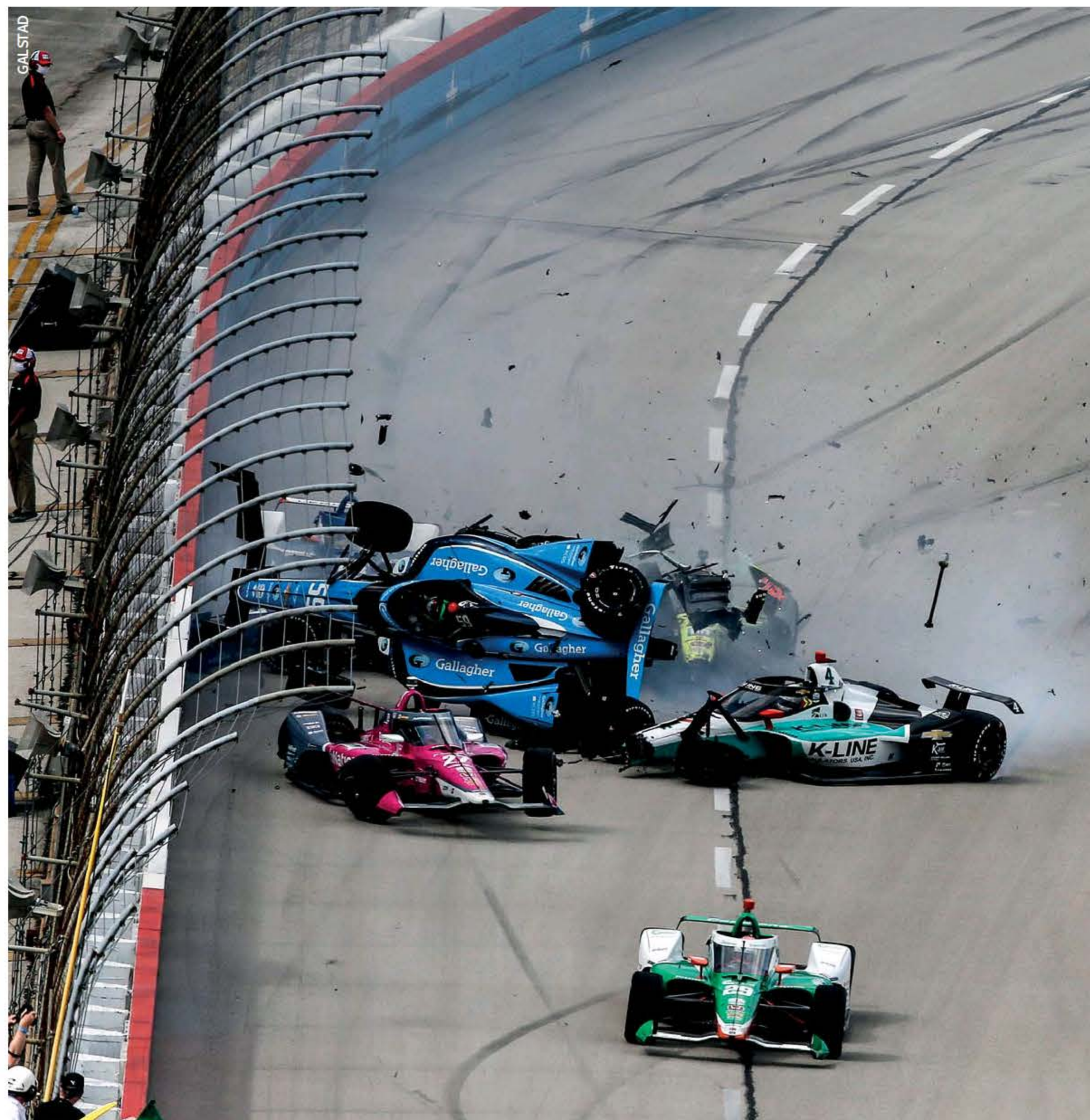
“Rosenqvist came in slightly hot, making his crew flinch, then encountered a stuttering Ericsson”

pitstop in a 212-lap race and all those on the lead lap stopped for service. Rosenqvist came in slightly hot, making his crew flinch, and then encountered a stuttering, stalling Marcus Ericsson on his way out and had to take to the grass to avoid the Ganassi driver. That was enough to send him down to 12th. His team-mate had no such problem, as the #5 crew sprung O'Ward ahead of Palou into third behind Dixon and the impressively composed McLaughlin, and they ran this way to the finish.

Graham Rahal charged over the final stint to climb to fifth, having followed the recovering Newgarden past Rossi and Harvey (who drew Rahal's anger for blocking, although race control disagreed) before passing Newgarden himself. Herta should have finished in the top six, but suffered a wheelbearing failure in the right rear, ending his day early.

Many of the same drivers that were prominent in race one also shone in race two, with the points from Saturday's race ensuring Dixon and Palou were on the front row, ahead of Power, O'Ward, Harvey, Newgarden, McLaughlin and Pagnaud.

The race began badly when Pietro Fittipaldi ran his Dale Coyne Racing car into the back of Bourdais, spinning him into



Rossi. The other Coyne car of Ed Jones and the second Foyt car of Dalton Kellett were collected in the accident, while Conor Daly's Carlin entry launched off the wreck and turned upside down, skidding along on its rollhoop until digging into the infield turf and flipping the right way up. The shunt would also damage the cars of Hinchcliffe and Kanaan, despite their best efforts to pick their way through the debris.

Dixon and Palou took off at the restart, chased by the fast-starting Harvey, who was able to leave Power and O'Ward to dice sketchily over fourth place, as Newgarden drew up onto their tail. Following the first round of stops, O'Ward remained fifth despite emerging ahead of Power, because the pair of them had been jumped by Newgarden.

The two-time champion then got around Harvey but couldn't escape, and so it ran until lap 115 when Harvey's failed wheelbearing cooked the right-rear corner of the MSR car in a near identical manner to Herta's problem the day before.

Rather unnecessarily, a caution was thrown in response, and everyone on the lead lap pitted together. The crews of Power and Rahal jumped their guys up to second and third respectively — behind Dixon of

course — and ahead of Newgarden, O'Ward, Palou and Rosenqvist.

A lap after the restart, O'Ward managed to pass both Newgarden and Rahal, and four laps later disposed of Power to grab second and set his fastest lap of the day. Rather than attack Dixon, O'Ward was urged to save fuel as all teams were trying to make it to the end of the 248-lap race on just one more stop. So he fell prey to Rahal, who also blasted ahead of the fuel-saving Dixon to lead for 13 laps — until he too got the call to ease up, and so ceded the lead to the Kiwi, who was featherfooting it, 10mph off his best lap.

Dixon, Rahal and Palou made final stops on lap 186, O'Ward stopped next time by, Power and Rosenqvist the lap after that, and Newgarden a lap later still. For Newgarden, it was perfect timing as simultaneously the field was slowed by a caution because Rosenqvist's car had shed a rear wheel.

And so the #2 Penske car emerged ahead of O'Ward, Rahal, Dixon, the early-stopping Pagnaud and Power, and Herta. Newgarden would have to pass the off-strategy Takuma Sato, but this he did without problem five laps after the lap 197 restart.

But O'Ward took only a lap longer and was stalking the Penske driver. At the



RESULTS ROUND 3/15, TEXAS (USA), 1-2 MAY, RACE 1 (212 LAPS - 305.280 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	1h45m51.3417s
2	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+0.2646s
3	Patricio O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1.7807s
4	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+2.8561s
5	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+6.6040s
6	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+7.9030s
7	Jack Harvey (GBR)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+8.5046s
8	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+9.5898s
9	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+10.0657s
10	Simon Pagenaud (FRA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+10.4271s
11	Tony Kanaan (BRA)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+12.0188s
12	Ed Jones (ARE)	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan / Dallara-Honda	+12.5785s
13	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+12.9479s
14	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+14.3546s
15	Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	+15.0507s
16	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+17.4939s
17	Ed Carpenter (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+19.8938s
18	Dalton Kellett (CAN)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+23.9568s
19	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
20	Rinus van Kalmthout (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
21	Conor Daly (USA)	Carlin / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
22	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	190 laps-wheelbearing
23	James Hinchcliffe (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	158 laps-accident
24	Sebastien Bourdais (FRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	55 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 173.036mph. **Fastest lap** Ericsson 23.6606s, 219.098mph.

Grid set by championship positions: **1 Palou**; **2 Power**; **3 Dixon**; **4 Herta**; **5 Pagenaud**; **6 Harvey**; **7 Bourdais**; **8 van Kalmthout**; **9 Ericsson**; **10 Newgarden**; **11 O'Ward**; **12 Sato**; **13 Rahal**; **14 Fittipaldi**; **15 McLaughlin**; **16 Rossi**; **17 Carpenter**; **18 Rosenqvist**; **19 Jones**; **20 Hinchcliffe**; **21 Hunter-Reay**; **22 Kellett**; **23 Kanaan**; **24 Daly**.

RACE 2 (248 LAPS - 357.120 MILES)

1 O'Ward 2h06m31.1155s; **2 Newgarden** +1.2443s; **3 Rahal** +5.6449s; **4 Dixon** +6.0386s; **5 Herta** +6.3782s; **6 Pagenaud** +7.0088s; **7 Palou** +8.3686s; **8 McLaughlin** +11.8928s; **9 van Kalmthout** +12.7212s; **10 Hunter-Reay** +14.5929s; **11 Carpenter** +15.3180s; **12 Ericsson** +16.0741s; **13 Power** +17.8136s; **14 Sato** -1 lap; **15 Kanaan** -2 laps; **16 Rosenqvist** -2 laps; **17 Harvey** 115 laps-wheelbearing; **18 Hinchcliffe** 30 laps-mechanical; **19 Bourdais** 0 laps-

accident; **20 Rossi** 0 laps-accident; **21 Fittipaldi** 0 laps-accident; **22 Jones** 0 laps-accident; **23 Kellett** 0 laps-accident; **24 Daly** 0 laps-accident.
Winner's average speed 169.360mph.
Fastest lap Palou 23.8507s, 217.352mph.

Grid set by championship positions **1 Dixon**; **2 Palou**; **3 Power**; **4 O'Ward**; **5 Harvey**; **6 Newgarden**; **7 McLaughlin**; **8 Pagenaud**; **9 Rahal**; **10 Herta**; **11 Sato**; **12 van Kalmthout**; **13 Ericsson**; **14 Bourdais**; **15 Rossi**; **16 Fittipaldi**; **17 Rosenqvist**; **18 Jones**; **19 Carpenter**; **20 Kanaan**; **21 Hunter-Reay**; **22 Hinchcliffe**; **23 Kellett**; **24 Daly**.

CHAMPIONSHIP **1 Dixon** 153; **2 O'Ward** 131; **3 Palou** 127; **4 Newgarden** 116; **5 Rahal** 107; **6 Pagenaud** 102; **7 Herta** 100; **8 McLaughlin** 99; **9 Power** 99; **10 Harvey** 90.

start of lap 225, the McLaren SP driver feinted to the right, tucked back in before the P1 surface, but still carried enough momentum through Turns 1 and 2 to draft Newgarden down the back straight and dive inside at Turn 3.

The 2019 Texas winner had nothing in response, and O'Ward went on to score a brilliant first IndyCar win. Rahal felt his car go loose in the final couple of stints, but he was able to stave off Dixon to the flag and claim third.

Herta was fifth, a position he stole from Pagenaud at the final restart while Power was seeking to go around the outside of his team-mate. When Pagenaud moved up the track, Power was left out in the marbles, grazing the wall and falling back to 13th, the last car on the lead lap. ❄

NEXT RACE

INDY ROAD COURSE 20 MAY ISSUE

Can anyone stop Scott Dixon from marching inexorably towards *another* title?

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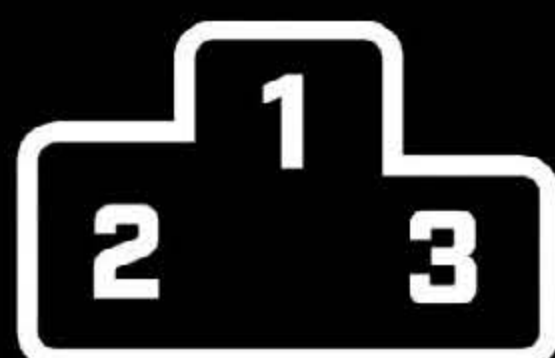


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Das capital as he marks his title charge

EUROFORMULA OPEN
ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)
1-2 MAY
ROUND 1/8

American Cameron Das took a clean sweep of all three races as Euroformula Open supported the Portuguese Grand Prix.

Ex-British F3 ace Louis Foster claimed pole position in his Dallara-Spiess run by Motopark satellite CryptoTower. But Das, driving for Motopark proper, got past Foster on the opening lap and extended his lead to win by 9.5 seconds. Rafael Villagomez completed the podium in his HWA-powered Van Amersfoort Racing car, while Nazim Azman (CryptoTower) was fourth.

EFO's first-ever reversed-grid race began with race one's sixth-place finisher Enzo Trulli on pole and Casper Stevenson alongside, but Azman got the jump on



Das heads Foster on his way to victory in the first race

both of them at the start. The Malaysian couldn't hold off Das, who took the lead at half-distance. Stevenson held off Trulli (son of Jarno) to become the second VAR driver to take a third-place finish.

Fastest laps from race two formed the grid for the finale, and Foster, who had pitted with brake problems, had new tyres fitted and earned pole. That was until he was given a four-place grid penalty because the repair work carried out in the pits was more

than was permitted by the regulations.

VAR's Andreas Estner inherited pole, but was passed by Das on lap two. Foster passed the German a few laps later to claim second. Then Estner was hit by Azman, sustaining a puncture. Azman finished third, but a penalty promoted Drivex man Trulli to third.

Red Bull Junior Jak Crawford was too young to take part in the event until the finale on Sunday, his 16th birthday. He claimed seventh position.

Busch celebrates birthday in style to close on Petty's record

NASCAR CUP
KANSAS (USA)
2 MAY
ROUND 11/36

Kyle Busch continued the run of different winners in NASCAR Cup this season while also doubling his victory at Kansas Speedway as a birthday celebration.

Last Sunday, Busch became the 10th different winner in 11 races after avoiding a wreck on a restart with two of 267 laps remaining and holding off Kevin Harvick on fresher tyres.

The win, which came on Busch's 36th birthday, also maintains his run of taking

to the top step of the podium in each of the past 17 seasons – one short of the 18-strong record held by seven-time Cup champion Richard Petty.

"What's really cool is that we started the race good and we worked our way forward from the start," Busch said. "We made minor adjustments all day to the car and nothing really did anything."

"We kept getting tighter as the day went on, even though we were trying to free up. We did a long simulation session this week, that was helpful. I feel like we're really close for Kansas at least and what we can do and what we can learn on that."

"I look forward to hopefully being able to celebrate with my team. It's cool to be able to work the way we did today."

Busch was the leader on the final restart with two laps remaining. With the help of a push from his Joe Gibbs Racing team-mate Martin Truex Jr, Busch ran clear of Ryan Blaney and Kyle Larson, who wrecked on the restart.

The race remained green as Harvick closed in but Busch held on for the win. Brad Keselowski finished third, Matt DiBenedetto was fourth and Chase Elliott rounded out the top five.

JIM UTTER



NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

WEEKEND WINNERS

EUROFORMULA OPEN
ALGARVE (PRT)

Races 1, 2 & 3
 Cameron Das
 Team Motopark

NASCAR CUP
KANSAS (USA)

Kyle Busch
 Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Camry)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
KANSAS (USA)

Kyle Busch
 Kyle Busch Motorsports (Toyota Tundra)

SUPER TC2000
SAN NICOLAS (ARG)

Facundo Ardusso (below)
 Honda Racing (Honda Civic)



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Miller swaps expletives for exaltation

MOTOGP
JEREZ (ESP)
2 MAY
ROUND 4/19

“We’re in the s*** right now.” That was Jack Miller’s assessment last Thursday ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix. It was motivated by his lacklustre start to life as a factory Ducati MotoGP rider, having finished ninth in the opening two rounds and crashed out of the Portuguese race. For someone who came into the season as an early favourite, it was a wholly underwhelming run and one that copped the Australian a hefty amount of criticism.

And it wasn’t unjust, either. Factory team-mate Francesco Bagnaia had two podiums to his credit ahead of Jerez, as did Pramac’s Johann Zarco, while even rookie team-mate Jorge Martin managed a rostrum in Qatar.

There was a sense, then, that Jerez needed to be a turning point for Miller. As far as venues go to do that for a Ducati rider, it wasn’t ideal. Prior to last Sunday, Ducati’s last win at the circuit came in 2006.

For the first 13 tours of the 25-lap Andalusian contest, that drought looked set to continue. Yamaha polesitter and pre-event points leader Fabio Quartararo was setting a hot pace at the head of the pack, having moved back into the lead on lap four after dropping to fourth at the start.



Miller leads Morbidelli at the start; Quartararo has dropped to fourth

In the space of five laps, Quartararo reeled off five high 1m37s efforts to build his gap to early leader Miller to over a second. Quartararo continued to open that advantage to 1.5s and a repeat of his 2020 Jerez heroics looked assured.

But from lap 13 to 14 his pace dropped by a second and continued to fade thereafter. Quartararo was suffering from an unexpected arm-pump issue, cruelly denying him a victory that never looked in doubt before lights out. Losing all power in his arm, Quartararo gritted his teeth to come home with three points in 13th.

Quartararo’s plight opened the door for Miller’s redemption. He cruised onto the back of the French rider and took the lead away from him on lap 16, quickly putting over a second between himself and Bagnaia – who was quick to demote Quartararo also.

Filled with self-doubt from his tough start to the season, Miller admitted he had to converse with himself during his stint in the lead to make sure the heat of the situation didn’t get to him.

Bagnaia put a bit of pressure on Miller in the latter stages, reducing his team-mate’s lead from 1.9s at the start of lap 21 to 1.2s on the penultimate lap. But after almost throwing it away at the Turn 7 left-hander, Bagnaia relented his charge. That didn’t stop a worried Miller riding an overly defensive line through the final corner on the last lap – adding “I felt like a bit of a t***” doing that.

No matter. Five years after his shock maiden victory in wet conditions at Assen, Miller was a MotoGP race winner again to silence his critics and ease his own mind, while in the process vindicating Ducati’s decision to promote him from Pramac for 2021.

Bagnaia took over the lead of the championship by two points courtesy of Quartararo’s misery, while Franco Morbidelli rode his two-year-old Petronas SRT Yamaha to third – a “sweet” podium as he struggles to hide his frustrations at his technical situation in 2021.

Takaaki Nakagami “cried” in disappointment at missing a maiden podium by just 0.7s on his LCR Honda, while reigning champion Joan Mir was fifth on his Suzuki ahead of in-form Aprilia ace Aleix Espargaro.



Quartararo looked set to win, but was banjaxed by arm pump woes



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Maverick Vinales was too weak on the brakes to advance beyond seventh but felt good on his Yamaha, while Zarco was eighth on his Pramac Ducati. A “destroyed” Marc Marquez — stiff from a nasty FP3 crash — led home his frustrated Honda team-mate Pol Espargaro in ninth.

Valentino Rossi’s form remained indefensible, as he struggled to 17th at the venue where he claimed his most recent podium one year ago. With a decision on his MotoGP future expected in the coming races, it’s hard to see how Yamaha or Petronas can justify him continuing with 2021’s most competitive bike so far — not least with team-mate Morbidelli dragging podium pace out of an old bike having been denied a factory M1 for 2021.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 4/19, JEREZ (ESP), 2 MAY (25 LAPS – 68.708 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	41m05.602s
2	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+1.912s
3	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+2.516s
4	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+3.206s
5	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+4.256s
6	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+5.164s
7	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	+5.651s
8	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+7.161s
9	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Honda	+10.494s
10	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	+11.776s
11	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	+14.766s
12	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	Honda	+17.243s
13	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+18.907s
14	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	+20.095s
15	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+20.277s
16	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+20.922s
17	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+22.731s
18	Tito Rabat (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+30.314s
19	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	+37.912s
20	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	+38.234s
R	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	11 laps-accident
R	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	11 laps-accident
R	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	0 laps-accident

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

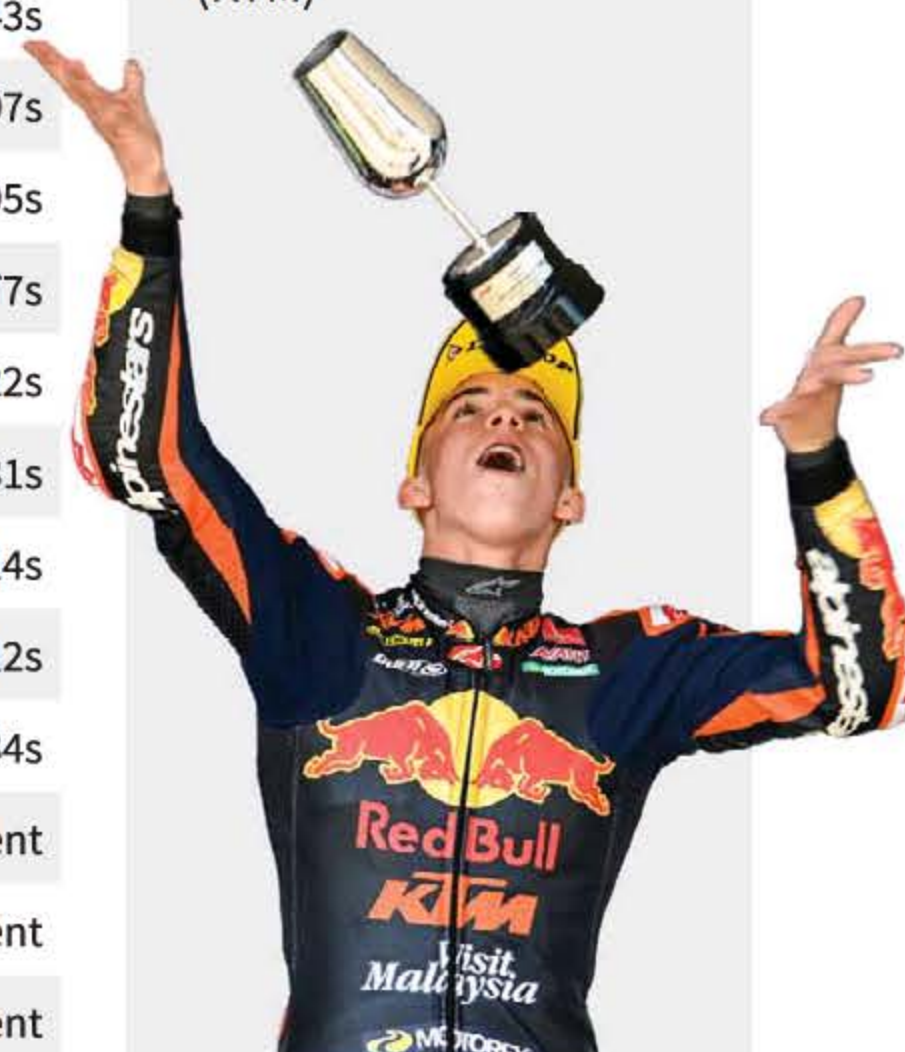
JEREZ (ESP)

Fabio Di Giannantonio
Gresini
(Kalex)

MOTO3

JEREZ (ESP)

Pedro Acosta (below)
Ajo Motorsport
(KTM)



Winner's average speed 100.320mph. **Fastest lap** Quartararo 1m37.770s, 101.196mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Quartararo 1m36.755s; 2 Morbidelli 1m36.812s; 3 Miller 1m36.860s; 4 Bagnaia 1m36.960s; 5 Nakagami 1m37.008s; 6 Zarco 1m37.054s; 7 Vinales 1m37.070s; 8 A Espargaro 1m37.085s; 9 Rins 1m37.124s; 10 Mir 1m37.154s; 11 Binder 1m37.467s; 12 Bradl 1m37.502s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Morbidelli 1m36.916s; 2 Binder 1m37.350s; 3 P Espargaro 1m37.407s; 4 M Marquez 1m37.489s; 5 Bastianini 1m37.675s; 6 Oliveira 1m37.746s; 7 Rossi 1m37.915s; 8 Marini 1m37.925s; 9 Petrucci 1m38.065s; 10 A Marquez 1m38.069s; 11 Lecuona 1m38.139s; 12 Savadori 1m38.325s; 13 Rabat 1m38.641s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Bagnaia 66; 2 Quartararo 64; 3 Vinales 50; 4 Mir 49; 5 Zarco 48; 6 Miller 39; 7 A Espargaro 35; 8 Morbidelli 33; 9 Rins 23; 10 Binder 21; 11 Nakagami 19; 12 Bastianini 18; 13 Jorge Martin 17; 14 P Espargaro 17; 15 M Marquez 16; 16 Bradl 11; 17 Oliveira 9; 18 A Marquez 8; 19 Petrucci 5; 20 Marini 4; 21 Rossi 4; 22 Savadori 2; 23 Lecuona 2; 24 Rabat 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Yamaha 91; 2 Ducati 85; 3 Suzuki 53; 4 Aprilia 35; 5 Honda 33; 6 KTM 27.



NEXT REPORT

FRENCH GP
20 MAY ISSUE

Has a second top-flight win unlocked a purple patch of form for Ducati man Miller that will carry over to the Le Mans Bugatti circuit? And what can Rossi recover at a venue where he's won three times?



SEASON
PREVIEW

Bringing the dynamo back to Dynamics

Three-time British Touring Car champion Gordon Shedden is back behind the wheel of a Honda Civic Type R this year after three seasons away. Cue everyone else looking nervously over their shoulders

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES

He was always a wiry chap anyway. But blimey, he's looking trim at the age of 42. That's Gordon Shedden, three-time British Touring Car champion, one of the country's greatest front-wheel-drive tin-top battlers of all time, the guy who's making a return to the BTCC this weekend at Thruxton after three years away. The Scot who's back in his adopted Midlands family of Team Dynamics.

Shedden is relaxing with Autosport on a beautiful sunny April day at Silverstone, next to the humble little camper van (insert joke about Scots being frugal here) that he's driven down from home in Fife. It's lunchtime on the BTCC media day, and three hours later his Honda Civic Type R will lay down a marker on an end-of-day performance run that leaves rival eyes watering and the famous #52 at the top of the times.

Yeah, he's back in the groove already.

The funny thing is, Shedden should have returned for at least some races in 2020 following his largely unsuccessful two seasons in the World Touring Car Cup with Audi team WRT. But then COVID struck and, paradoxically, allowed someone to get better... "That's the kind of weird and wonderful thing," he laughs. "When Matt [Neal] had his argument with the tree, and the tree won significantly, I had a couple of days' testing in the car. Had the world not changed the way it's changed, and we'd started the season on time, with the best will in the world there's no way Matt would have been able to start the year."

Neal recovered from those cycling injuries to line up alongside Dan Cammish, but Shedden describes his *hors d'oeuvres* in the Civic FK8,

which he had never driven before, as "I guess a bit of a spark. It was really good for me to get back in with a team that I trust, with a product which is right and correct, and it was also really good for the team that those days were an eye-opener, because they immediately had my data, and they were like, 'OK, if anyone had any doubts that I'd forgotten how to drive for a couple of years in WTCR, those doubts were gone'. And they were, 'OK, we know we can work with this again'. So it kind of started from there."

But the winter of 2020-21 was a tough one for Dynamics. Honda pulled its official support, so did sponsor Yuasa (there is some shared ownership between the two companies). Halfords stayed on board, and wanted Shedden. But Dynamics chief Neal was working on an additional backer, which could have resulted in himself, Shedden and Cammish as a Civic superteam. Trouble is, a third TBL entrants' licence was required for that. Series promoter TOCA felt obliged to put it to a teams' vote as to whether Dynamics should acquire the spare TBL, and not enough teams said yes...

"It's really good for me to get back in with a team that I trust, with a product which is right and correct"

"It was a little bit hands to the pump to try and pull things together," recalls Shedden. "There was a massive effort to get three cars full stop. It's definitely a chapter for the book, and probably about six chapters for Matt's book, because it was hell trying to piece it together. For many reasons out of our control it didn't happen, and some of it, you know, perhaps wasn't the most sporting, and some of it beggars belief."

The upshot was the arrival of Dan Rowbottom, with his sponsor Cataclean entering a new relationship with Halfords, and the exit of not only three-time champion Neal, but also Cammish. Shedden, therefore, is leading the Dynamics charge in a car he's never raced. "It's a different car from the FK2 that >>



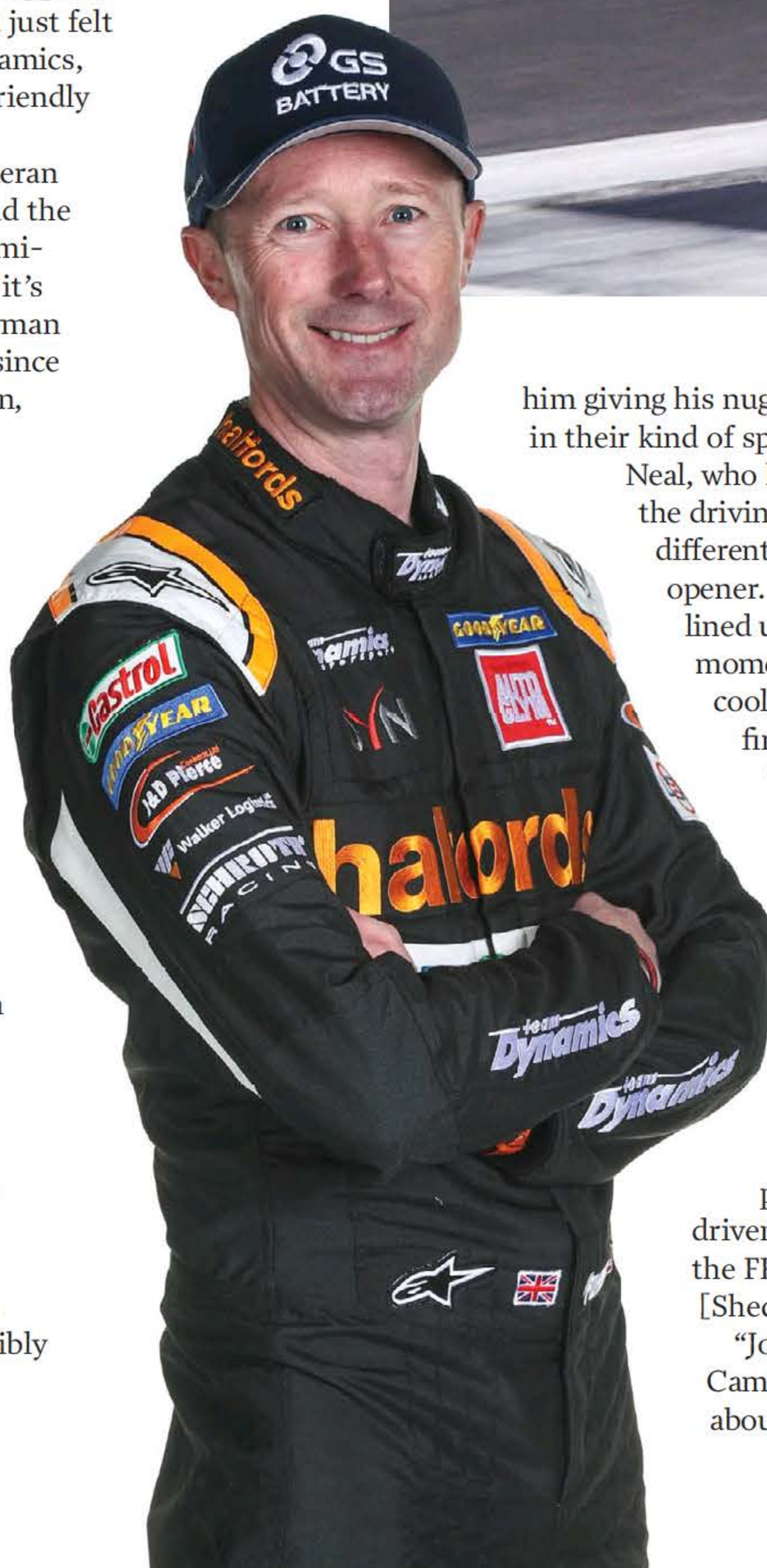
“First things first, we have to have a crowd back. We’re desperate for it. We’ve missed it so much”

I finished with,” he says of the FK8 Civic. “I’ve kind of tried to think about it, because people say, ‘Oh, how’s it different? Is it better? Is it worse?’ And I say, ‘Well it’s very obviously from the same family, it’s just got a different heartbeat’. What works with one isn’t quite what works with the other. But straight away it was great, and it felt like an old pair of slippers. Everything was where I wanted it to be. It just felt right. And of course going back with Dynamics, all the right people, all the same people, friendly faces, it was just everything I needed.”

Well, not quite all the same people. Veteran engineer Eddie Hinckley, the brains behind the three ‘Flash’ Gordon titles, moved into semi-retirement upon Shedden’s departure. So it’s now Dynamics technical chief Barry Plowman on duty. Plowman has worked with Neal since the 1990s, so it’s a departure for both men, with Shedden’s lofty fellow three-time champion focusing solely on his team-principal role. What’s he contributing?

“He’s just in a ‘give-me-lots-of-abuse role’ at the minute!” chuckles Shedden. “But Matt... what a perfect team boss to have, because he’s been there, seen it, done it in the most recent of times. He’s drawn on his experience, and that’s the thing: you can’t leave any stone unturned, and the great thing with Matt is that he calls a spade a spade. When you don’t get a lot of praise from him, you certainly know that you’re not delivering, and you do everything you can to make that as minimal as possible, you know? But he’s a good mate as well as a team boss. It’s just that where previously I would only get abuse in the truck, now I can get it over the headset as well when the race is happening. But it’s ideal.

“Obviously, Matt had Barry as his engineer from day dot back to the Nissan Super Touring car, so they have an incredibly close relationship. And I have that close relationship with Matt. Sometimes it’s



The Honda Civic went like a ‘Flash’ to top the Silverstone test session



him giving his nuggets of information to Baz to say, in their kind of speak, and that’s great as well.”

Neal, who has left the door open for a return to the driving seat in future, admits that “it’ll be different” not to be on the grid for the BTCC opener. Since 1992, only once has he not lined up for the start of a campaign. “At the moment I’m fairly relaxed about it, and I’m cool, but I’m sure it’ll be different come the first race and I hear the engines going at the start,” adds the 54-year-old.

Neal, of course, is the only person in the Dynamics fold to have raced the Civic FK8. “That’s why I’m here not as a team principal so much, as more of a sounding block,” he admits. “I’m not coaching – they don’t need coaching per se. One, I’ve driven a variety of different things over the years, and that builds up your portfolio of knowledge. Flash has driven the FK2 a lot, but it is different to the FK8, so I’m trying to help them both [Shedden and Rowbottom] along the way.

“Joking apart, I learned things off Cammish. I like to think I taught him a lot about racing in touring cars and stuff, but



I did also learn off him – he’s incredibly naturally quick. And it’s trying to transfer some of that knowledge across to these two, from my bank and Cammo’s bank.”

The enforced departure of Cammish, who is returning to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, still rankles with Neal, but he stresses that the Yorkshireman is “still part of the family. We all love Dan – there’s not one member of the team who didn’t get on with him. He was like our pet!”

So, what chance a Neal comeback in 2022? “I’ve got to take a rain check on how the team performs this year, because the last few years I felt my role changed. Where I used to be the sort of leader from the front, I settled into the place of being the steadying of the ship and letting Flash or Cammo go for the glory. And I didn’t mind that, I enjoyed that actually. It was sort of a role that Steve Soper did very well and professionally, and I idolised Steve – I think he’s the ultimate touring car driver of all time. So let’s see what happens with the performance and how I feel at the end of the year.

“You know, it is stressful, the going out in the car, and it’s more relaxing coming here at the moment, because when you’re driving you’re worrying about the track, the car, the engine, the tyres, and optimising everything. And where it is at the moment I can just chip in my penny’s worth and let them do the worrying.”

Is Shedden worrying? He doesn’t seem to be, but he’s a terrier of a bloke who’s rarely projected any hint of vulnerability to the outside world. But with his other hat on, as business development manager of Knockhill circuit, there are concerns. Shedden is part of the royal family of Scottish motorsport, with father-in-law Derek



Neal (left) and Plowman (right) are in Shedden’s cohort at Dynamics

Butcher the owner of Knockhill, and brother-in-law Rory set to be at the BTCC sharp end in a Speedworks Motorsport Toyota. Come the series’ mid-August visit north of the border, it’s not inconceivable that Shedden and Butcher could both be in the title fight, so it’s vital for the circuit to be able to admit spectators.

“First things first, we have to have a crowd back,” says Shedden. “We’re desperate for it. As a business we’ve missed it so much. It’s only when you don’t have something, you realise what it means to you, and for us the crowd is just insane. The Scottish public only have one chance to see touring car racing a year and, having not been able to attend last year, believe me we are doing everything to get the support of the Scottish government and Motorsport UK to allow that to happen.” >>

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Why not offer to make Nicola Sturgeon a VIP? “We’ll do anything at the minute. Maybe if we’re not allowed a crowd, we’ll get special dispensation to put her in as a passenger for success ballast and see how she likes that! But it’s so important for the country. We’ve all had 12 months of hell. You know, we’ve got 240 acres on the top of a hill in Fife – it has to be one of the safest places in Scotland to watch an event.”

Looking shorter term, the BTCC kicks off at Thruxton, and that’s a track where the Civic has always excelled – in FK2 and FK8 format. “Yeah I’m not unhappy that we’re starting at Thruxton...”

“I’ve got as good a chance as anybody else. I’ve not been brought back here to make up the numbers”

muses Shedden. “Obviously I haven’t been there for three years though, with no testing there, so that makes it difficult. But there are other places I’d have preferred it not to start at, that’s for sure.”

And that could be the ideal launchpad for Shedden’s bid for title number four: “As we stand here just now, I’ve got as good a chance as anybody else. I’ve not been brought back here to make up the numbers. Our purpose is to be as competitive as possible out of the box. Of course the championship is the aim, but you need a bit of luck and you need the cards to fall your way to help that happen. But if we do everything that we can do, if we can be on the front foot, if we can go to every round knowing that we’ve done the



best that we possibly can, then what will be will be.”

Just over three hours after the interview, Autosport wanders over to the Dynamics pit to try to grab a quick word with Shedden about his test-topping performance. But within 10 minutes of the session finishing, he’s already behind the wheel of that wee camper and setting off for Fife. Several hours later still, Neal tweets “was cool day for me but kind of surreal drive home not feeling the usual post event mental drain”. Shedden replies “only two and a half hours left on my drive home” during a stop for coffee. No purple sectors on his run north of the border, but watch out at Thruxton. 🏁

WILL ROWBO BE ANY COP?

It’s fair to say that BTCC observers wrote off Dan Rowbottom during his 2019 BTCC rookie season at the wheel of a Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes. And it’s clear that his move to Team Dynamics for 2021 comes thanks to his commercial package with backer Cataclean. But there’s far more to Rowbottom than meets the eye.

As a young kid, he beat a certain James Calado to the 2001 Super 1 Comer Cadet title, and continued a friendly rivalry with the current factory Ferrari endurance star throughout his karting career, as well as battling it out with Adam Christodoulou, Jules Bianchi and Jean-Eric Vergne. He made an underfunded move into cars in Radicals and the SEAT Cupra Cup, before “I walked away from the sport for nine seasons. The problem when you compete in karting at a really high level is when you come to cars, people assume you have a lot of money, because karting is expensive. But we were very fortunate that we had lots of factory deals over the course of my karting career. So it was a really good time, and probably my fondest time of my career because it was fun and it was pure.”

Rowbottom returned to the tracks, after a couple of Lotus Cup outings, in the Renault Clio Cup in 2016, but “we had a sponsor that let us down tremendously. But the reality is that it was the best thing that could have happened, because it brought me and Cataclean together. They had this fantastic automotive product



[an engine-cleaning fuel additive] that was very big in the trade, and they wanted to take it the consumer market, so I managed to convince them that motorsport was a good way of doing it. Here we are going into our fifth year together and it’s fantastic.”

Fifth in the 2017 Clio Cup, Rowbottom improved to fourth in 2018, with three wins. But then came that difficult maiden BTCC season. A best finish of 14th and three 15ths were his only points in the Mercedes, but he had a glut of finishes just outside the scoring positions. “For sure on paper it was pretty crap!” he laughs.

But he’s settled in well at Dynamics, and was 10th quickest at the Silverstone media day. “To have Flash [Gordon Shedden] and Matt [Neal] sort of sat above me is fantastic, because Flash is arguably one of the best front-wheel-drive drivers that’s existed,” enthuses Rowbottom. “I’m looking at the data and I’m able to pick little things up. And Matt’s a multi-generational touring car driver, so the experience he brings to me is huge. It’s a fantastic opportunity. I think it’s the first time in my career where I can safely say I’ve got all the tools at my disposal to do a good job, so let’s see what happens.”

While Autosport is chatting to Neal, Rowbottom brings cups of tea from the garage to his boss and Shedden. It’s a nice gesture, one that illustrates his role as the new boy. “The guys at Dynamics know what they’re doing,” he says. “For me it’s just sit and smile, try and look pretty, and drive the car – it’s nice and easy!”

And Shedden is not ruling out his new 32-year-old team-mate. “He had a fantastic karting career, he’s a race winner in Clios, he’s ticked the boxes, but for whatever reason it didn’t quite come together for him in the Merc,” he points out. “But certainly with us he has everything, he has the hardware, he has the support. We’re doing everything we can to give him every opportunity, and to be fair he’s soaking it up like a sponge. I’m sure he’ll have his days in the sun as the year goes on.”

Our friends in the north

The Lancashire squad of Ciceley Motorsport has been a BTCC race winner for several years with Adam Morgan and Mercedes. But the switch to BMW should see it step further forward

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



“S traight away these cars from West Surrey Racing are right, and the build quality is astounding. To the nth degree, every little detail is mega, and it’s so nice to be back in modern machinery, completely up to date with everybody else. It’s mega to drive.”

Those words belong to Adam Morgan, the low-profile, usually there-or-thereabouts guy of the British Touring Car Championship, battling it out with the Mercedes A-Class built and run by his family Ciceley Motorsport team. Three times he has finished seventh in the championship. In five of the Merc’s seven seasons he was a race winner. Now? The A-Classes have been pensioned off to the Touring Car Trophy, and Morgan has his hands on a BMW 330i M Sport, the model taken to 2019 title glory and the 2020 runner-up spot by WSR superstar Colin Turkington. And, for the first time, he has a

seasoned and proven race winner in the sister car: Tom Chilton, the, erm, *high-profile*, usually there-or-thereabouts guy of the BTCC.

It’s time for Ciceley to step forward, but who are this band of brothers from up north? Norm Burgess, the team’s hugely enthusiastic commercial director, is proud that it’s populated almost entirely by Lancastrians, many of whom are graduates from National Centre for Motorsport Engineering courses at the University of Bolton run by Mark Busfield, who was team manager at RML during the squad’s Super Touring glory years with Nissan.

Steve Farrell, the team’s veteran Australian engineer who first worked with Morgan in the Chinese Touring Car Championship, jokes: “It is completely unique! I say to the guys that I felt less foreign when I was in China than when I go up north. But they are an incredible team.” Burgess adds: “We go racing because we love it.





Even if it's Oulton [Ciceley's local circuit], we roll up on the Wednesday night with cans of drink and fish and chips. We are always the first team there, and we genuinely get butterflies about what the weekend is going to bring."

The boss is Morgan's father Russell, a noted rally driver who turned to the circuits in the 1990s in Caterham racing. Young Adam was enthused about the sport and raced karts from age seven to 16, before stopping to concentrate on his GCSEs and play rugby. Then, rather than step into Formula Ford or Renault like the rest of his karting generation, "I went into a baby blue Mk1 Ford Escort Mexico. My dad was still rallying with Martin Kenyon, who is our chief mechanic now and was his navigator, and Martin's son Chris became my navigator, so we had a real father-son thing. Absolutely loved it. It's such a nice atmosphere and good fun."

Morgan Jr later had a test in a Ginetta G50, "and ended up not too bad and it was, 'Bloody hell, you're actually all right at this'". Two years in Ginettas culminated in the 2011 GT Supercup title, the first year of the G55s, and for which the prize was a budget to contest the 2012 BTCC. The beauty was that, after a 2010 season running with Frank Wrathall's Dynojet team, the Morgans had gone it alone for 2011, establishing the team as an offshoot of the family's Ciceley Commercial Mercedes dealership. And Morgan beat serious opposition. "It was just dad, lad and a few mates from home," he says. "We were taking on Carl Breeze, who'd been in Ginettas for years, Nathan Freke – because of the prize a lot of people came back to the championship to try to win it. Somehow we went out and won it. To this day it's still my all-time fondest memory."

Morgan describes his rookie BTCC season, in a Speedworks



"We go racing because we love it. We get butterflies about what the weekend will bring"

Motorsport Toyota Avensis, as "a baptism of fire. My confidence was through the roof but I was probably very naive. It was tough, a little bit disheartening at times, and we were struggling with DNFs. We came away from that year and scratched our heads for a bit and said, 'Right, let's have one more go at it by ourselves. We'll buy a Toyota [the ex-Wrathall Dynojet car] and have a crack at it.' We started Ciceley Motorsport again, run from my dad's shed, and I scored more points in the first five races than I did all year in 2012. I learned so much in terms of BTCC racecraft."

Then came the decision to build the Mercedes, with technical leadership from long-time BTCC and World Touring Car Championship team boss/engineer Paul Ridgway. "My dad will never do that again – that nearly killed him, building our own car!" grimaces Morgan. "We thought, 'Let's bring Mercedes to the championship and try and get some manufacturer support. We know all the contacts and stuff to get people involved.' But unfortunately it never came to fruition. The contact got passed to Germany, and at that point Mercedes was just F1 and DTM, and that's where the money went, but probably just 1% of Lewis >>



Russell Morgan has committed a lot to the Ciceley operation

World Rally Championship. “There’s not many people to speak to there, so we chatted and went out to McDonald’s a lot together. He said, ‘Do you fancy coming to help out?’, and it’s gone from there.

“Adam’s confidence and the morale in the team were deteriorating. But by virtue of closing one door and opening another with a fresh face, there was a new start. We had a really cracking weekend at Thruxton – that was almost nothing to do with me! – and from

“It was getting a bit, ‘That was the perfect lap, the car felt great, you’re four tenths off’”

Hamilton’s salary would have funded us for the year...

“It was a monumental task. We had no CAD or anything like that. We had all the teething problems and learning how it all works, but I got my first win, was quite a regular podium visitor and I loved it.”

Into the second half of the 2010s, Ciceley teamed up with Italian engineering consultancy Hexathron Racing Systems, with the Laser Tools Racing Mercedes of Aiden Moffat run alongside. LTR then went it alone in 2019 and, on the advice of Hexathron, dropped the Mercedes mid-season in favour of the Infiniti Q50. Hexathron continued with Ciceley too, but the tie-up was nearing its end.

“I don’t really know what happened,” says Morgan. “The relationship didn’t break down. They were blaming aero and other stuff, but there were similar-shaped cars on the grid that were still performing and we weren’t. Halfway through the year my dad was getting to the point where he said, ‘I want to win, I don’t want to fill the numbers’, and we brought Steve in for Thruxton, and we went out and we had two podiums that first round. The old girl could still do it and still bring results.”

“I’d done Chinese touring cars for three years, and worked with Adam there,” adds Farrell, who has pedigree in Formula 1 and the

there it was a root-and-branch through everything: how the mechanics are doing things; set-ups; and I started a simulator programme with Adam. Everybody said the Mercedes was too old – probably, but there was nothing fundamental to write it off.”

Then things moved on in 2020. Of the front-wheel-drive opposition, the Honda Civic FK8 and Toyota Corolla were in their second season, and the fourth-generation Ford Focus ST was quick out of the box. Morgan scored a reversed-grid win at Oulton, but results were getting harder to come by. “These newer cars like the Fords had all been CAD-designed, so much work had gone into them, and our little Mercedes was built in a little shed at home,” says Morgan. “It was not demoralising – I like to be the underdog and surprise people every now and then, but it was getting a bit, ‘That was the perfect lap, the car felt great, you’re four tenths off’, and I was trying my hardest but not getting anywhere. My dad then made the very bold decision to say, ‘Right, let’s look to the future.’”

“I was thinking, ‘Oh my God, I don’t know where the other tenths are going to come from,’” relates Farrell. “Russell was quite taken with the idea of getting some BMWs, much as it took some persuading of WSR to do it. You wouldn’t make a racing car

Chilton has switched from
BTC Honda line-up...



...and is complementing
Morgan in his new home

Engineering veteran
Farrell has brought
confidence to team



by choice a front-wheel-drive car, would you? The BMW is a more conventional racing car.”

Morgan has experience of rear-wheel drive from his rallying and Ginetta days, as well as Ciceley’s trips to endurance races in Bahrain and Dubai with Mercedes GT4 machinery; Chilton, too, has raced RWD in LMP1 outings. But for neither is their rear-drive experience strictly relevant. “When we first got it, I was a little bit anxious,” admits Morgan. “Then very soon I had a lot of confidence in the car. We went to Knockhill, and I thought that was going to be one of the tracks where it was going to be a struggle, but by lap six I was taking Duffus Dip at full speed.

“A lot of people say it takes time to adapt. I don’t think it does. I’d say there’s little elements of rear-wheel drive that take time, like warming your tyres, and in particular one we found is the braking. I’m so used to having front-wheel drive, where so much weight is transferred to the front, and in this you don’t have as much weight transfer and locking fronts, so that’s something we’re having to adapt to. But when it’s up to full speed and everything’s hot, I feel absolutely fine and comfortable, and happy to push as hard as I can.”

And the BMW could put Morgan and Chilton in the limelight. They’re chalk and cheese as characters. While Morgan is quiet and unassuming, he describes Chilton as “a really positive guy. I really like him, because he never gets out of the car and kicks his helmet or anything like that, he’s just happy all the time, which is so nice. I get on with him really well.”

The Morgans are so humble and modest that, if he didn’t look the spit of his son, you might assume that team principal Russell was the truckie, as he’s usually to be spotted carrying stuff to and fro. But, says Burgess, “he’s responsible for everything relating to performance, and I’m everything else”. And that includes the talking and the commercial deals that have allowed the team to flourish. Former main backer Mac Tools is still on board, but automotive products firm Tetrosyl is now the title sponsor, in 2020 via its Carlube product and for 2021 with Car Gods. Amusingly, the knock-on is that Morgan and Chilton now have ‘Race God’ emblazoned on back of their racesuits. It’s easier to imagine

perma-tanned extrovert Chilton embracing that than Morgan... (Burgess laughs that he had to persuade a reluctant Morgan to cite ‘racing driver’ as his occupation when he and his girlfriend went last summer to register the birth of their first baby.)

“For one reason or another, we’ve always had a title sponsor,” points out Burgess. “Last year [in the COVID crisis], loads of teams had dramas [because they were unable to welcome guests at races]. But Tetrosyl stood by us, paid us exactly what they said they would, and pledged an extra year so that it’s three years instead of two. It has helped us plan, and we could never have gone down the BMW route and taken that step forward without them.”

And, without those BMWs, it’s highly doubtful that Chilton would have joined. At last Morgan has a barometer. “In the Merc I’ve always been more experienced than the guy who’s sat in the other car,” says Morgan. “Had we put Shedden or Plato in the car, would they have gone four tenths faster than me? It’s something we’ll never know. But in the last three years in touring cars I’ve raced against Tom, we’ve always been very equally matched. Tom has raced in some of the biggest teams and best teams in motorsport, and comes with this huge fountain of knowledge. His detail of set-up and everything is mega, and it has really helped bring the rear-wheel-drive BMW for us on faster.”

Can that lead to a title attack? Potentially, but the boys at Ciceley aren’t getting carried away. “We’ve got to keep our expectations realistic,” asserts Morgan. “It’s our first year with the BMW, we are up against some very big teams. We’re still a family-run team against WSR who’ve been racing for 40 years. But deep down I’m thinking I’m now in a championship-winning car, I’ve got a brilliant engineer in Steve, there is no reason we can’t do it. I’ve set some goals to be very near the front come the end of the year.”

“We know everyone else has got at least a year of understanding of their cars at each circuit,” reflects Farrell. “I’m always thinking, ‘2022 there’ll be no excuses, then we’ll crack on’. But Ciceley have absolutely bought into the new era that they can do better. They’re brilliant, and it’s a fantastic atmosphere in the team. I have my dream that we can really do something.” ❄

What to look out for in 2021

It's been a pretty busy silly season in the BTCC since the chequered flag fell to end the 2020 campaign last November. While last year's top two have stayed put, there's been a lot of fat to chew elsewhere

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



CAN SUTTON AND INFINITI IMPROVE ON THEIR TITLE-WINNING FORM?



Sutton has relished the opportunity to get some proper test mileage done

Ash Sutton won the BTCC title in 2020 with an Infiniti Q50 that had been barely tested on the track before the season started. So what can he do in 2021 with a winter of development behind the Japanese machine?

As he points out: "We rolled out last year and didn't want to disrupt the rhythm." With the Infiniti a winner in the opening round at Donington Park, there was little motivation in going experimental on set-up. After all, the new-for-2020 Laser Tools Racing/BMR Racing alliance knew it was already in the ballpark.

To be fair, there hasn't been a great deal of testing in this build-up either. "We've been keeping ourselves to ourselves," admits Sutton. "We did a shakedown at Donington

in mid-April, just getting back into it. Then we rolled out at Snetterton a week later, with the intention of getting mileage under our belts, and did 500km, which is a lot for these cars. It was nice to actually do some testing this year."

"This is the first proper testing we've done with the Infiniti," adds Sutton's engineer Antonio Carrozza, speaking at the Silverstone media day that followed two days after the Snetterton run. "It's the first chance we've had to play with the car and push the boundaries."

While Sutton was very much run by his old BMR Subaru crew in 2020, and Aiden Moffat by his existing LTR staff, there is more BMR influence for Moffat this year. Dan Millard engineered Sutton to the title in 2017, then

joined West Surrey Racing and did the same role for Colin Turkington in 2019, but he's back in the fold now and working with Moffat. Meanwhile, the third Team Hard-crewed LTR Infiniti of Carl Boardley has Richard Owen on engineering duties – last involved in the BTCC with Michael Crees in 2019, he's the guy who designed the infamous Volvo 850 estate of 1994.

And how will the Q50 cope if and when it has to carry the newly increased maximum success ballast of 75kg? "We're sort of trying to compare ourselves to the worst-case scenario," alludes Sutton, "and it's been handling every situation we throw at it. The little changes we've made have given me a fire in my belly – or relit it maybe!"

PLATO CLOSES IN ON CENTURY



Plato is back after sitting out 2020 season

Two-time BTCC champion Jason Plato enters the new season just three victories away from a magic century of wins. The 53-year-old could well have got there last year given a fair wind for the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra team, but then COVID struck and Plato and the team decided to pause their commercial contracts for a year, with Plato sitting out the campaign ready for a return in 2021.

That kept Plato sat on 97 wins, the last of which came in the 2019 season finale, while PMR ran a revolving cast of young drivers (plus Rob Austin) in a single-car effort. But the Astra appears to be bang on the pace in testing, and Plato has been joined in the

line-up by Dan Lloyd, who has his biggest BTCC opportunity yet after being a title contender in the hotly contested TCR Europe series at the wheel of a Honda.

"He is going to be fast and he is going to be a pain in the arse, and quite honestly that's how it should be," says Plato.

Will Lloyd's presence push Plato on to that 100th win, or could he be a hindrance if he's too much of a pain in the Plato backside? Either way, the veteran says he's not too bothered: "In all honesty it's just a number. If I get to 100 I'll want more. But certainly I don't want to stop at 99 – I do want to get to 100. The only downside is it will cost me a few quid as I'll have to have a party."

ENTRY LIST

NO	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR
1	Ash Sutton	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50
16	Aiden Moffat	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50
41	Carl Boardley	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50
2	Colin Turkington	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport
12	Stephen Jelley	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport
15	Tom Oliphant	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport
3	Tom Chilton	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330i M Sport
33	Adam Morgan	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330i M Sport
4	Sam Osborne	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST
44	Andy Neate	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST
6	Rory Butcher	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla
23	Sam Smelt	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla
11	Jason Plato	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra
123	Dan Lloyd	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra
22	Chris Smiley	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback
62	Rick Parfitt Jr	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback
80	Tom Ingram	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback
96	Jack Butel	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback
24	Jake Hill	MB Motorsport / Ford Focus ST
48	Ollie Jackson	MB Motorsport / Ford Focus ST
28	Nic Hamilton	Team Hard / Cupra Leon
31	Jack Goff	Team Hard / Cupra Leon
40	Aron Taylor-Smith	Team Hard / Cupra Leon
88	Glynn Geddie	Team Hard / Cupra Leon
32	Dan Rowbottom	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R
52	Gordon Shedden	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R
66	Josh Cook	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R
99	Jade Edwards	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R
-	TBA	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R



Turkington's been looking for "the small gains"

TURKINGTON AND WSR STRIVE TO ADDRESS WEAKNESS

What do you do if you've just lost the BTCC title after your car didn't like wet, cold conditions at the Brands Hatch Indy Circuit finale? If you're West Surrey Racing, you take Colin Turkington and your BMW 330i M Sport back to Kent as soon as you can to sort it out on another cold and wet day.

"We started two weeks after the Brands final, and worked on things we didn't like to try and improve the package," says four-time champion Turkington, who is joined for a third year in the WSR line-up by Tom Oliphant, and the returning Stephen Jelley, back in the Sunbury team's fold for the first time since 2009.

Since the circuits opened for business in 2021, WSR has been testing twice each at Brands Hatch

and Silverstone, and once at Snetterton. "We've had good mileage," says Turkington. "We're just looking for the small gains and not trying to reinvent the wheel."

Turkington is unsure at present about the effect of the maximum 75kg success ballast – the 330 has never raced with that weight. "You won't properly find out until you get in a race situation," he says.

What he possibly *will* find out about is set-ups of Ralts and Reynards from the 1980s and 1990s vintage days of British F3. WSR boss Dick Bennetts was renowned as 'The Guru' back in the day, and Jelley has taken his engineer from Team Parker Racing, former David Price Racing and Paul Stewart Racing man Andy Miller, with him to the team...

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TEAM MERGER COULD PUT TITLE SHOT INTO FOCUS

It's all been going on at Motorbase over the winter, following a hugely encouraging maiden season for the fourth-generation Ford Focus ST in 2020. Founder David Bartrum sold the team to AmD boss Shaun Hollamby – whose team had been running Honda Civic FK2s in 2020 for Jake Hill and Sam Osborne under the name MB Motorsport (in deference to commercial partner Mark Blundell) – and Osborne's father Pete. It was effectively a merger between the two teams, and four Ford Focuses would be run, two under the Motorbase name for

Osborne and Andy Neate, two as MB for Hill and Ollie Jackson.

Recently, however, Hollamby has withdrawn from the scene, although remains very much involved in Hill's career. And now Bartrum is back in a management role on race weekends. With long-time lieutenant Oly Collins still on board, it's almost as if nothing has changed, except there's a bunch of AmD/MB people in the garage, including sporting director Blundell. Also behind the scenes, Jackson and his father Paul bought in to engine supplier Mountune, whose Ford powerplants were

looked upon with green-eyed envy by some of the opposition in 2020, during the autumn.

But all we care about is what happens on track, right? Well, Hill should definitely lead the charge, and he and engineer Craig Pawley have found that their Civic set-ups transfer nicely to the Focus. "Croft was amazing," relates Hill of a test where many of the leading teams were present. "We had a really, really good day there. We were quickest, which we were surprised about because we felt there was more left in the car."

BIG NAMES IN NEW CARS

There's a whole host of intriguing new driver/team/car combinations for 2021, with some of the BTCC's brightest up-and-coming talents taking the start this weekend at Thruxton in machinery they'd never driven until a few weeks ago.

Foremost among these is Tom Ingram, probably the most complete driver on the grid not to have yet won a BTCC title. He has transferred from the Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla equipe to the Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N squad, and has taken his Speedworks engineer Spencer Aldridge with him.

"The team have welcomed us with open arms, and Spencer's been given pretty much free rein," says Ingram. "He's done so much to the car over the winter he's almost redesigned it and started again to all intents and purposes. He's done an amazing job, and the good thing is we're not trying to make it a Toyota Corolla; we're not trying to make it a Toyota Avensis; we're making a Hyundai i30 N Fastback even better."

Into Ingram's place at Speedworks has arrived Rory Butcher, fresh from a season in a Motorbase Ford in which he was an outside title contender going into the final round. "We think we're where we need to be," says Speedworks boss Christian Dick, whose team has expanded to a second



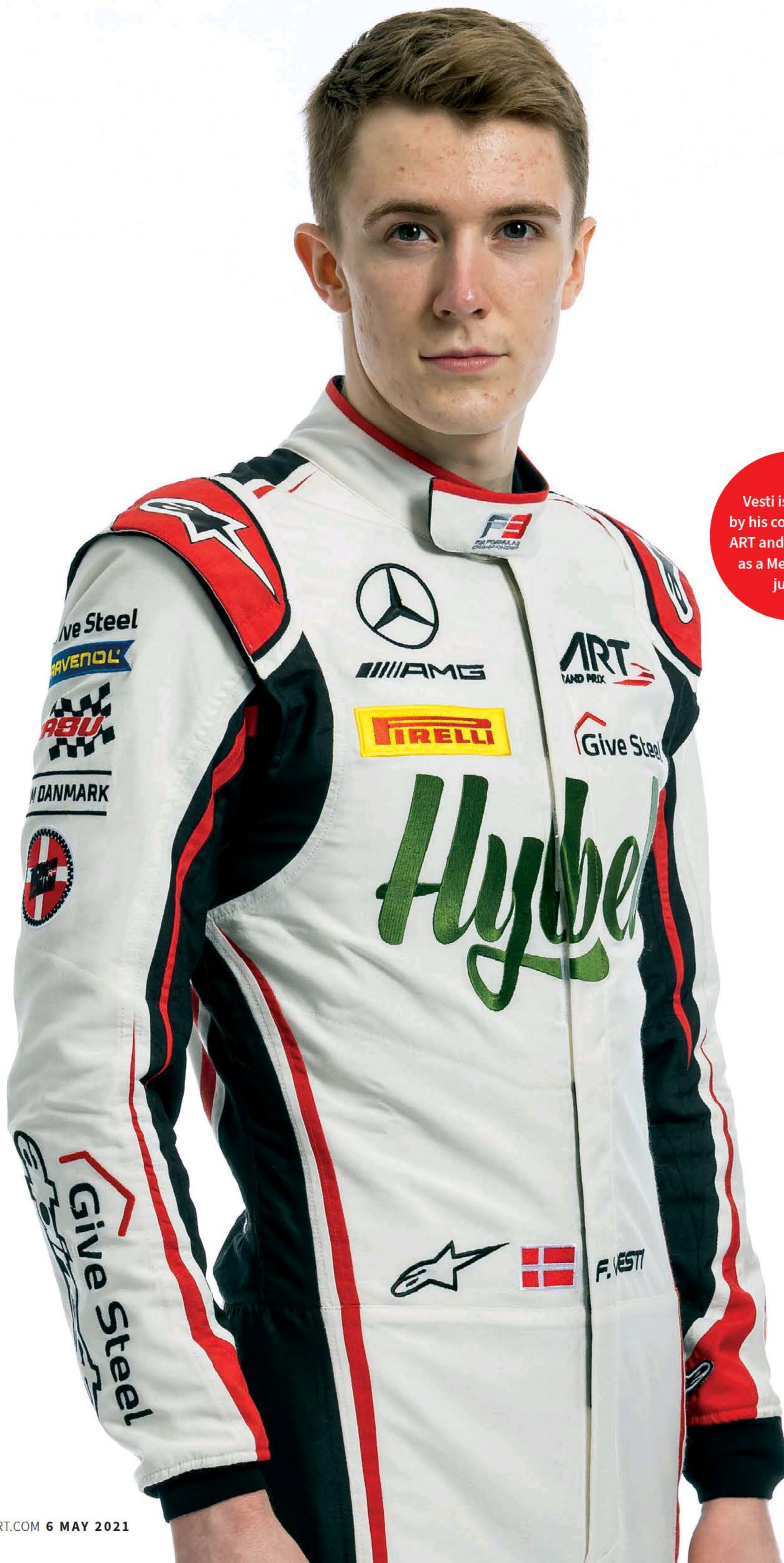
Toyota for Sam Smelt, and has recruited tin-top engineering veteran Paul Ridgway to replace Aldridge. "We've got a good package and quick car, but we've got to make sure it works for Rory."

And then there's Jack Goff. A regular at the sharp end in his Eurotech Honda days, he's languished over the past two years in Team Hard's Volkswagen CCs, but they've finally been put out to pasture and replaced by the all-new Cupra Leon, which Goff took to second quickest on the Silverstone media day. "The car feels good, and it's the fastest we've ever been around Silverstone," he says. "We can make a small tweak and it's better, and that's all you can ask for. But I'm not unrealistic: at the moment, I'd be pretty happy to be in the top 10."

[P84 TOCA SUPPORTS PREVIEW](#)

CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
9 May	Thruxton
13 June	Snetterton
27 June	Brands Hatch Indy
1 August	Oulton Park
15 August	Knockhill
29 August	Thruxton
19 September	Croft
26 September	Silverstone
10 October	Donington Park
24 October	Brands Hatch GP



Vesti is fired up by his confidence in ART and new status as a Mercedes F1 junior

SEASON
PREVIEW

THE BID TO REDISCOVER THE ART OF WINNING

ART dominated GP3, but has been put in the shade by Prema since the start of FIA F3. Now it's snaffled the Italians' Mercedes junior away, and snapped up the big human-interest story of the winter

MEGAN WHITE

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

Aged just 19, Frederik Vesti has already made a name for himself. The Dane had two strong seasons in Formula 4 before dominating the inaugural Formula Regional European Championship in 2019. Now he's joined ART Grand Prix for his second season in the FIA Formula 3 Championship, after placing fourth in his rookie campaign with Prema Racing in 2020, and has recently joined the Mercedes Formula 1 Team's junior programme.

Joining Vesti at the French team are Juan Manuel Correa, returning to motorsport after a year out following his serious crash at the Spa Formula 2 round in 2019 that claimed the life of Anthoine Hubert, and Alexander Smolyar, who stays with the team for a second season.

The team placed third last year, winning two races with Theo Pourchaire, who has moved up the ladder to ART's F2 team. But with its illustrious history – in GP3, the series that pre-dated FIA F3, it carried Esteban Gutierrez, Valtteri Bottas, Esteban Ocon, Charles Leclerc, George Russell and Hubert to the title – the French operation is clearly striving to return to the top.

Vesti certainly thinks so, and says he is “extremely confident” going into this weekend's first round at Barcelona with his new team and with the backing of the reigning F1 world champions behind him. After the two pre-season tests at the Red Bull Ring and the Spanish track, he reflects: “I could very quickly feel how powerful and how motivated the people are and for me, to be with a team is working with people. They need to be motivated, I need to help them be motivated and they need to help me be motivated. I could very quickly feel at the test that they were really hungry – they wanted to win more than I've ever really felt before, they really want to put in the work and that was matching me very well.

“I think ART is the kind of team that when you get there is straight into work and you never really stop working on the things you need to improve, and I just really like that approach and the work ethic of the team.”

On the team's performance so far, he says: “I believe as a team we are really strong. I was doing really, really strong race runs. I was also pretty fast on the new tyres on day one. I was struggling a bit on day two though with a bit of car balance and finding the right approach on the new set of tyres to warm them up properly.

“But when I wasn't performing as I should, my team-mate was right up there battling for P1, which means we have the car, both with new tyres and race runs, so I'm extremely confident going



into the weekend with my new team. The expectations are quite simple, from both myself and the team, and that is to become champions. Since the day I signed with ART, that's what we've been working towards. It's a really long season, it's a really long process of improving, of consistently looking into the detail of how you get better.

“If you start out the season as the fastest team or the fastest guy, it doesn't mean that you're going to stay the fastest, because everyone is really hungry to become better and win. So the guy who's going to be winning towards the end of the season to keep it, whoever keeps improving and consistently looks at themselves and understands what they need to improve even though maybe it's going well, that's the guy who wins, that's what we are really focusing on to do – that's going to be the key.”

As the highest-placed returning driver (or second if Logan Sargeant is confirmed at Charouz), Vesti says that “of course there is some pressure”, but said he “blames himself first every single time”. Since joining the Mercedes academy earlier this year, he says it has given him “a lot of motivation. It's a bit like waking up and looking where you are and where you can be if you put in the work.

“That's very true that it gives a lot of motivation, but also it gives a lot of trust, because the people I'm working with have already done it, they've already taught other drivers the important things to become a Formula 1 driver. My goal is to become a world champion in Formula 1, so it's a hard goal to become a Formula 1 driver, and >>



Correa has been on a long, painful journey back to racing fitness

I am just so happy and motivated to be around Mercedes.”

Team-mate Correa is also ready for a new challenge, but approaches it from a very different place. After suffering catastrophic injuries in the crash at Spa, he spent two months in a coma, before having to relearn many things “from zero”. He says it has been an “excruciating, long, painful and mentally hard year and a half”, but his huge sense of self-belief and “racing driver mentality” meant he returned to the track less than 18 months later for testing in Austria.

Correa signed with ART in December, having turned up to a meeting with team boss Sebastien Philippe in Paris in a wheelchair, armed with his medical records, to undertake the gargantuan task of convincing him to give him a seat. And it worked.

Correa says Philippe “wasn’t sure if I was kidding or if I was serious, but I said, ‘Before you say anything, just sit down with me and let me show you why it’s possible’. I think what really convinced him was the way I said it, because I was so convinced — I was trying to be so convinced for him, I told him there’s no risk that I will not be ready, this is all I have been doing for the last year or so, you know. Trust me, just give me this chance.

“And a few weeks later, they called and he was talking with my manager, and they agreed that they were going to do it. So I must say, I’m very thankful to him. I’m very thankful to Fred Vasseur, who was one of the major stakeholders in ART, because they really did take a chance on my project, they believed that I could do it, and many other people did not. So I really appreciate that from the bottom of my heart.”

Correa says it has been a “huge challenge — probably bigger than



Dominant Prema team took Oscar Piastri to F3 title glory in 2020

I was expecting” to get back in the car, but has a steely sense of determination pushing him forward. He says he is hoping to be fighting in the top 10, but that “the goal eventually is to be on the pace and to be fighting for podium positions and be on my team-mates’ pace. If this whole process and recovery has taught me something, it’s that you have to believe 100% and not think about the bad possibilities. And that’s really what I did, I tried not to think about it. I knew I was trying to do something so crazy that if it didn’t happen, it was not gonna be the end of the world. But genuinely, in the back of my mind, I knew it was possible.”

Team principal Philippe feels similarly optimistic about the squad’s potential this season. He describes the testing as “very good” and is “quite confident that we should have some good performance”.

He adds that he is “very happy with the way Juan Manuel is able to come back after such a long period. I remember the first time we met in Paris at the end of last year, it was quite a big bet for him and for us to commit together. But I think on both sides

MARTINS: THE RENAULT CHAMP WHO HAS TOPPED TESTING



Martins was fastest in second test, but reckons his rookie status keeps the pressure off

Reigning Formula Renault Eurocup champion Victor Martins says he’s “really excited” to get his rookie FIA Formula 3 season started, and that this is his “opportunity to shine”.

The Frenchman claimed the Renault title with ART on his third attempt, and says that makes him “fully ready” for the challenge of an F3 season with Dutch team MP Motorsport. After topping the times during the second round of testing at Barcelona, he reckons “we’ll try

to reach the top as soon as possible to get victories and pole positions”.

“I don’t think I have any pressure, because it’s my first year, so I don’t have expectations,” says Martins, “but the main target is for me to improve and to learn as much as possible in this season.”

The 19-year-old was dropped by the Renault (now Alpine) F1 Academy after missing out on the 2019 title to Oscar Piastri by just 7.5 points, but was picked back up after



SUTTON

we were really motivated to make it happen. It's true that there was some question mark over if Juan Manuel could be ready at the beginning of the season, you know, and I think he has been working really, really hard all winter to come back."

Philippe says the team has also made good progress with Vesti: "Yeah, I think we have done a steady job together so far. We are still in the process of learning each other, but we did four very strong test days with him. He has a very good understanding and a nice feedback on the car and his pace is quick. So we're very happy now. Let's wait to see the first race, where it's really important to perform."

The goal for ART GP this season? "The goal is always to win," says Philippe. "The target is for us to win both championships, with the drivers and the team. There will be a lot of competition from other teams, very strong. But this is our target."

And with such a strong, determined driver line-up, that goal doesn't look out of their reach. ❄

taking the crown last year. He is feeling confident with his new team, where he's joined by long-term friend and fellow Alpine Academy driver Caio Collet (the Brazilian who finished runner-up to Martins in the 2020 Renault season) and Dutch rookie Tijmen van der Helm.

"I'm confident on the side of the team, with what they are expecting as a team and me as a driver," he asserts. "I feel we can do great

things. I don't want to say we don't have any goals, but it's just like we have no pressure – we know the car is working. I think for the moment I'm doing a really good job, so we just need to continue like this.

"We need to reach the top as soon as possible and to get that confidence from the pole position or the victories. A single win can make a huge difference on the confidence of the driver and then the rest of the championship."

"I WAS TRYING SOMETHING SO CRAZY THAT IF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD"

ENTRY LIST

NO	DRIVER	TEAM
1	Dennis Hauger (NOR)	Prema Racing
2	Arthur Leclerc (MCO)	Prema Racing
3	Olli Caldwell (GBR)	Prema Racing
4	Jack Doohan (AUS)	Trident
5	Clement Novalak (FRA)	Trident
6	David Schumacher (GER)	Trident
7	Frederik Vesti (DNK)	ART Grand Prix
8	Alexander Smolyar (RUS)	ART Grand Prix
9	Juan Manuel Correa (USA)	ART Grand Prix
10	Jak Crawford (USA)	Hitech Grand Prix
11	Ayumu Iwasa (JPN)	Hitech Grand Prix
12	Roman Stanek (CZE)	Hitech Grand Prix
14	Matteo Nannini (ITA)	HWA Racelab
15	Oliver Rasmussen (DNK)	HWA Racelab
16	Rafael Villagomez (MEX)	HWA Racelab
17	Victor Martins (FRA)	MP Motorsport
18	Caio Collet (FRA)	MP Motorsport
19	Tijmen van der Helm (NLD)	MP Motorsport
20	Laszlo Toth (HUN)	Campos Racing
21	Lorenzo Colombo (ITA)	Campos Racing
22	Amaury Cordeel (BEL)	Campos Racing
23	Ido Cohen (ISR)	Carlin
24	Kaylen Frederick (USA)	Carlin
25	Jonny Edgar (GBR)	Carlin
26	Calan Williams (AUS)	Jenzer Motorsport
27	Pierre-Louis Chovet (FRA)	Jenzer Motorsport
28	Filip Ugran (ROU)	Jenzer Motorsport
29	Logan Sargeant (tbc) (USA)	Charouz Racing System
30	Enzo Fittipaldi (BRA)	Charouz Racing System
31	Reshad de Gerus (FRA)	Charouz Racing System

CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
8-9 May	Barcelona (ESP)
26-27 June	Paul Ricard (FRA)
3-4 July	Red Bull Ring (AUT)
31 July-1 August	Hungaroring (HUN)
28-29 August	Spa (BEL)
4-5 September	Zandvoort (NLD)
23-24 October	Austin (USA)



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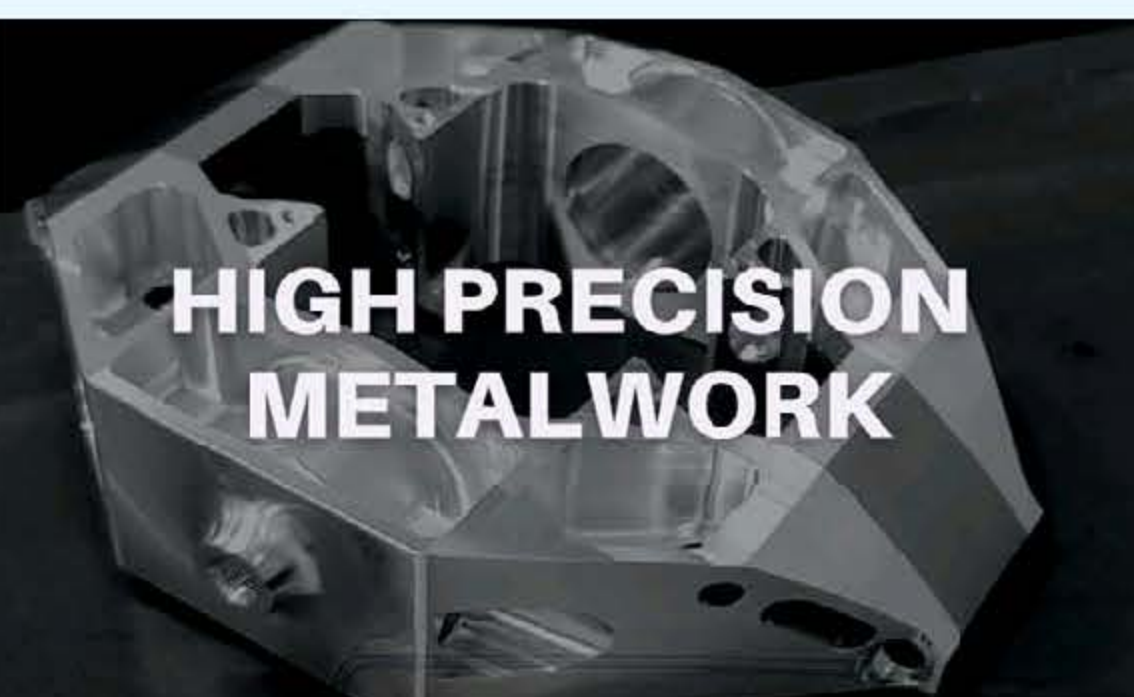
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- Manage department personnel from recruitment, onboarding, employee engagement through to separation.
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New series had its first standalone race in October and has 39 entries for this weekend



NOVICE AWARD, BRITISH GT ROUND FOR CITYCAR CUP

CITYCAR CUP

A new Novice Racer Trophy has been added to the CityCar Cup thanks to the championship attracting a significant number of rookie drivers, while it will also benefit from appearing on the British GT support bill at one event this season.

The British Racing & Sports Car Club category was launched in the middle of last year and features bespoke track-focused examples of the Citroen C1, Peugeot 107 and Toyota Aygo. Special conversion kits – including a remapped ECU and adjustable suspension – can be purchased, or drivers can buy ready-to-race cars. Unlike other series for C1s and Ford Kas, it does not feature endurance races.

The CityCar Cup has enjoyed an explosion of interest for its first full campaign, for which it has been granted championship status, and over half of the 39 drivers currently entered for the Donington Park season opener this weekend are complete racing rookies.

“We’ve attracted so many, to give them something to race for away from the more experienced racers is one thing, but the volume of novice racers we’ve attracted to CityCar Cup has blown us away,” said BRSCC head of formulae development Greg Graham. “The goal was to try to get as many new drivers into motorsport as possible and it’s proven, so far, to be

quite successful. We’ve also got some people who raced 15 to 18 years ago that have come back in this.

“A lot of people think motorsport’s too complex or too expensive, but we’ve tried to answer those questions and make it as easy and attractive as possible by formatting the CityCar Cup the way we have. It’s relatively cheap, and also the supply chain we’ve put together is almost a one-stop shop so there’s no chasing around the country to find bits and pieces. It all comes from one central supplier.”

The category initially appeared as a class within the Clubsport Trophy last year before attracting 15 cars for its first standalone event at Croft in October. Graham describes that as “a massive achievement with COVID”, while the interest for this year has been “spectacular”. He believes the championship can act as a stepping stone, with drivers progressing on to higher-powered machinery in other series.

The CityCar Cup has had a round at the July Donington Park British GT meeting added to its schedule for this year to replace a cancelled event at Silverstone.

“When we announced that, all the drivers were absolutely buzzing,” said Graham. “The visibility it will give to that championship is something that can only benefit it in the future.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Ginetta Junior tyre rule tweak to reduce costs

GINETTA JUNIOR

The tyre-use rules in Ginetta Junior have been changed for this season, with drivers now having to use one set for an entire race weekend, including Friday testing.

Previously, drivers received a new set at the beginning of Saturday and could use multiple tyres on a Friday, but organisers have tweaked the rules in a bid to reduce wastage — some teams had repeatedly tested on new sets to simulate qualifying.

The Michelin road tyres used in the category offer more performance as they wear down, and organisers considered a more drastic cut in the use of tyres to just two sets for the entire season. But teams were against this because it risked putting any driver who damaged their tyres during a race at a serious disadvantage, as they would then have to run slower, new rubber.

Even with the less significant tweak, Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher



says teams will get through far fewer tyres this year. "It's about looking at ways of reducing the advantage gained by expending on consumable items," he said. "It will cut the test tyre budget a little bit and reduce waste a bit as well."

Eddie Ives, boss of leading Ginetta squad Elite Motorsport, believes the change will have a limited impact as the tyres are less expensive than those used in many series. "New tyres are slower and, how it was, everyone was qualifying on a new set of tyres and it brought out the best in the kids," he added.

The rule change will have no impact at the opening Thruxton event this weekend because there is no Friday testing.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



New team to run ex-Balfe 720S GT3

BRITISH GT

The McLaren 720S GT3 chassis that took Balfe Motorsport to the cusp of the 2019 British GT title will return to the series with newcomer Enduro Motorsport this year.

Set up last year by Morgan Tillbrook, the Enduro team is a regular in the GT Cup with a Mercedes-AMG GT4 that the former Fun Cup racer campaigns with 2011 GT4 champion Marcus Clutton. The pair had planned to contest a partial British GT schedule with the machine, but have now stepped up to a full GT3 season after buying the first 720S to race in British GT.

Tillbrook said the opportunity to acquire the

chassis "was too good to pass up" and is targeting "a podium or two".

Reigning Radical Challenge champion Clutton, who shone in a one-off British GT outing at Oulton last year in John Seale's JMH Lamborghini Huracan, said he viewed the foray as "a multi-year programme that builds towards a championship challenge".

"I'd liken [Tillbrook] to Graham Davidson, who laid the foundations for his title the year before," said Clutton. "Personally, it's great to be racing at this level again, but more importantly a full season offers the team a chance to build momentum while learning at a faster rate."

JAMES NEWBOLD

IN THE HEADLINES

SCOTTISH GREEN LIGHT

Scotland has become the latest country in the UK to allow non-elite motorsport to resume following the easing of lockdown restrictions, leaving just Wales where the sport is yet to be given the green light. The first circuit racing event set to take place in Scotland this year is the Scottish Motor Racing Club opener at Knockhill on 6 June. Throughout the pandemic, Wales has been the most cautious at relaxing rules, and only one trial race meeting has been held there since COVID-19 first hit.

FORES BACK WITH CDR IN F3

F3 Cup race winner Alex Fores will compete for Chris Dittmann Racing in the opening round of the BRDC British F3 Championship at Brands Hatch later this month. The 21-year-old raced for the squad at Donington Park and Snetterton in the series last year, taking a best result of 13th, and may contest further rounds in 2021.

HAMMERTON JOINS EXCELR8

Mini Challenge racer Ethan Hammerton has swapped to the Excelr8 Motorsport squad for his second campaign in the category this year. The Renault UK Clio Cup race winner made two appearances for AmD in British Touring Cars last year, as well as taking a best result of 13th in his first season in the Minis with Jamsport.

SHORT IN SPORT SPECIALS

Multiple Mazda MX-5 champion Ben Short had his first run in Sport Specials at Silverstone last month, driving an MEV Exocet R (below) run by Stewart Mutch's team. Short has worked with Mutch but never raced the MEV kit car, which is based on an MX-5. "The car does feel quite different from an MX-5, almost single-seater," is how Short described it. Short briefly led 2020 Class C champion Mutch, but had to settle for two class seconds behind him.



Moss to be honoured at Goodwood meetings



Moss won Mille Miglia in Mercedes 300SLR '722'

GOODWOOD

The life of Stirling Moss will be honoured by Goodwood at the venue's three major motorsport meetings in 2021.

Moss, who passed away last year at the age of 90, famously won the 1955 Mille Miglia in a Mercedes-Benz 300SLR, which will be on display at both the Festival of Speed (8-11 July) and Revival (17-19

September) meetings.

The Revival will also feature many other cars Moss drove during his illustrious career, including his 1961 Monaco Grand Prix-winning Lotus 18, the Ferrari 250 GT he used to win the Tourist Trophy at Goodwood in 1961, as well as the Aston Martin DB3S in which he finished second at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1956.

The Stirling Moss Trophy for pre-1962

GT cars (formerly the Kinrara Trophy) will also become a permanent fixture at Goodwood, with races at the Revival and Members' Meeting (16-17 October).

"Stirling and his wife Susie were such an important part of the Goodwood family for so many years," said the Duke of Richmond. "All of us here felt his loss especially keenly as we weren't able to commemorate his incredible life as we would have wanted last year."

"We hope that fans at our events around the world will join us in celebrating his racing career and bidding farewell to 'Mr Goodwood' in 2021. Stirling's supreme skill and love for his sport will continue to be remembered at Goodwood."

Another renowned figure to be celebrated at Goodwood this year will be Roger Penske, who will attend the Festival of Speed, which will have a theme of 'The Maestros – Motorsport's Great All-Rounders'.

Penske is synonymous with American racing, his team having taken 18 Indy 500 victories and 24 top-flight American single-seater drivers' titles. A number of significant Penske machines will be at the event, including the Lola T152 that was part of Penske's first Indy 500 entry in 1969 and the PC23 that dominated the 1994 Indy 500.

Five F1 teams have confirmed that they will be attending the Festival of Speed in some capacity. Ferrari, Mercedes, McLaren, Red Bull and Williams have signed up so far.

Tordoff and Butcher in Pall Mall Cup action

HISTORICS

Former British Touring Car Championship ace Sam Tordoff was in action last weekend at the Donington Historic Festival.

The 32-year-old, who finished as runner-up in the 2016 BTCC before stepping back from racing in 2019 following the death of his infant son, was at the wheel of his father's MGB in the three-hour Pall Mall Cup.

"I'd never driven the car before," said Tordoff, who was

due to race a Ford Falcon before the engine let go in testing.

"We've got a few classic outings lined up – the Silverstone Classic, we've got an entry for the Goodwood Members' Meeting, and hopefully we're invited to do the Revival as well. It's a lot of fun and nice to be here without any pressure."

Sharing with Richard Woolmer, the pair qualified 39th in the near-50-car field before finishing 24th.



Tordoff drove his dad's MGB last weekend

Current BTCC contender Rory Butcher was also in action in the Pall Mall Cup, sharing a Porsche 911 with William Paul and Richard Tuthill to finish

26th. The Scot intends to enter a Jaguar E-type in the GT and Sports Car Cup at Silverstone later this month.

STEFAN MACKLEY

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Three drivers will get to race with Westbourne



Westbourne launches driver initiative for JSCC finalists

JUNIOR SALOONS

Leading Junior Saloon Car Championship squad Westbourne Motorsport has launched a driver development programme to support three defeated finalists from the category's scholarship day.

While Scottish karter Chloe Grant won the fully funded seat and made her car racing debut at Cadwell Park last month, Jack Meakin, Will Redford and Harvey Dent will all now benefit from extensive coaching before joining the JSCC grid later in the season with subsidised drives from Westbourne.

"I was really impressed with the standard of competitor at the JSCC

scholarship day," said Westbourne boss Richard Colburn. "Whilst the prize went to a very worthy winner, this still left three exceptional drivers without a race seat for 2021. They've never raced cars before and they all deserve a little break. We want to make sure they're coached properly and are ready to go from Brands Hatch in July onwards."

The addition of these three drivers is set to take entries in the popular series up to 30 later in the year.

Westbourne's JSCC season got off to a strong start at Cadwell, with Charlie Hand taking the early points lead after winning the second contest.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

White gears up for TV programme

GT5 CHALLENGE

Ginetta GT5 Challenge racer Chris White has been featured as part of the *Gearing Up* TV programme, which showcases various forms of motorsport from around the world.

White began competing in the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club category two years ago before stepping up to the G40 Cup last season, and he is now set to make his GT5 debut at Thruxton this weekend.

He explained that the

opportunity to appear on the programme – which was first aired last week on BT Sport – came about via social media.

"It was through Instagram – I try to do a lot on social media and generate a fanbase and sponsorship, and they picked it up on Instagram and wrote to me," said White. "They said they were interested in doing a TV interview on how I've risen up the motorsport ladder into the GT5 Challenge."

"It's fantastic we had that opportunity to tell the story

– it goes out across the world to 160 countries. Hopefully I can get some traction from it, and next month there should be a recap of this month [Thruxton's races]."

All the footage of White in the programme was recorded by himself and videographer Lewis Foster-John over the past year, and White said "it's great for British motorsport and Ginetta" that the categories were highlighted on a global platform.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

OUTING IN RARE BMW CSL

Patrick Blakeney-Edwards and Fred Wakeman debuted a BMW CSL in the Historic Touring Car Challenge at last weekend's Donington Historic Festival. They have raced a Rover in the series in recent years, but have now acquired one of the 10 original Schnitzer-built CSLs. "I love it," said Blakeney-Edwards. "The Rover is now for sale and we're planning to do the same run of races in the BMW." The duo finished seventh overall and third in class.

WARD BACK IN LISTER-JAG

Prolific historic winner Chris Ward was back in a Lister-Jaguar in the Stirling Moss Trophy race last weekend at Donington, after only limited outings in the past few years, and finished second alongside Le Mans 24 Hours class victor Rob Smith. The Lister is a continuation car owned by Steve Osborne, who will race it later in the season. Ward also shared the Jaguar E-type of Richard Kent, finishing on the overall podium in the three-hour Pall Mall Cup.

DEAN'S PRE-WAR DEBUT

Lotus Europa racer and former Road Sports champion Jim Dean made his Pre-War Sports Car debut at Donington in the 1939 Aston Martin Monoposto of co-driver Steve Skipworth. It was Dean's first experience of the Pre-War machine. "I've been double declutching the Ford Ranger pickup all week as practice," he said. They also shared Skipworth's Jaguar E-type in the Jaguar Classic Challenge.

PODIUM FOR EX-WARR LOTUS

Historic racing stalwart Simon Diffey took a podium on his debut in an ex-Peter Warr Lotus 20/22 in the front-engined Formula Junior race at Donington. Diffey started the car (below), which was raced in the 1960s by future Lotus Formula 1 chief Warr, in fourth and avoided polesitter Sam Wilson's spin at the first corner before going on to take third at the finish.



Turner gets back on track after nasty Hayes crash

SCOTTISH FF1600

Scottish Formula Ford 1600 driver Colin Turner was back behind the wheel of a racing car at Knockhill last weekend, his first appearance at a circuit since his life-changing crash at last year's Walter Hayes Trophy.

Turner was involved in a serious accident on the National pitstraight at Silverstone during a rain-affected Last Chance race in November, leading to the amputation of both his legs below the knee.

The Dumfries racer told Autosport in February of his intentions to return to racing this season and that work had already begun on adapting his FF1600 car to fit around his new requirements.

Close friend and fellow FF1600 competitor Neil Broome has been instrumental in helping Turner get back in a car and loaned his Westfield for Turner to drive during the lunch



Injured FF1600 racer Turner drove Broome's Westfield during Knockhill trackday lunch break

break of Sunday's trackday at Knockhill.

"It was an absolutely fantastic feeling [to be back in the car]," Turner told Autosport. "That was what I'd been working towards since the accident and the operation. Just to have that opportunity was amazing. Neil came up with the idea to use his Westfield.

"The only thing which was difficult was getting used to the clutch on Neil's car, because he likes to have his bite point right on the floor and I prefer mine higher up. So, I ended up getting

frustrated that I couldn't go faster."

Turner has been able to stand and walk independent of support since leaving hospital, although he requires better-fitting prostheses, which he is due to receive in the coming weeks. The 70-year-old remains hopeful of a racing return later in the year.

"That's the aim, and I really want to thank Neil and Knockhill Circuit for allowing me to go out during the lunch break, while nobody else was on track — they've done a fantastic job," Turner added.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

First KMSC event renamed in McCosh's honour

KMSC

The Knockhill Motor Sports Club has renamed its opening event of the season in honour of Scottish Legends racer Gerard McCosh.

The Gerard McCosh Trophy Meeting will celebrate the life of the popular driver, who died

earlier this year after battling cancer and was part of the Scottish Legends scene for nearly 20 years. All the cars at the 19-20 June event will carry special stickers in memory of him.

"As long as I can remember, Gerard has been a mainstay of the Scottish Legends racing scene," said KMSC

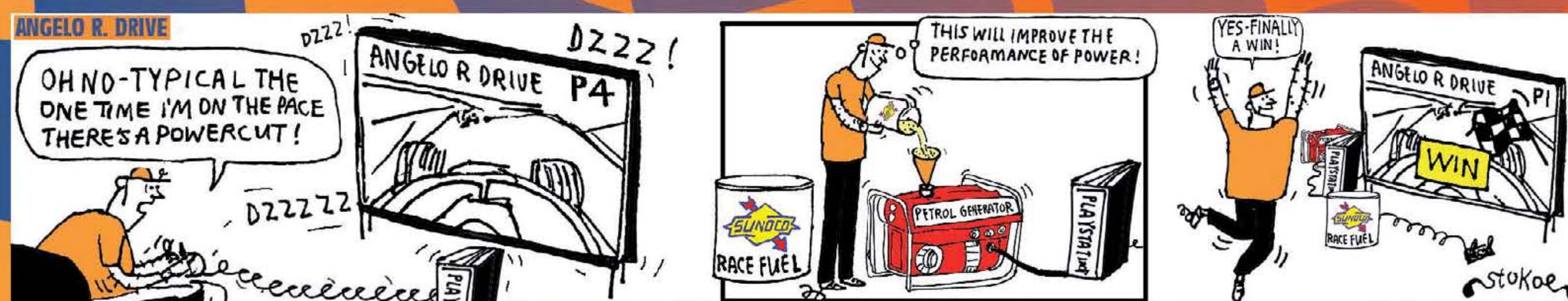
chairman Stuart Gray. "His effervescent smile lit up whenever you spoke to him, and his enthusiasm for racing and his fellow competitors was without match.

"He will be sorely missed and we hope that the naming of this meeting will ensure his memory will be ongoing," Scottish Legends Racing's

Andrew Donald added:

"Gerard was a one-off. He was a fun guy off track and a hard but fair racer on it."

The Scottish Legends category is now being administered by the KMSC and entry numbers are set to receive a boost for this season, with grids expected to reach up to 20 cars.



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Not museum pieces

The Donington Historic Festival showcased the very best of motorsport's heritage — something that needs to be protected

STEFAN MACKLEY

The roar of a thunderous V8 engine, a moment's silence before a series of downshifts interspersed by crackling and popping from the over-run as the rumbling roar picks up again in the far distance. It might be a cliché, but it really is enough to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

The Amon Cup for Ford GT40s at the Donington Historic Festival last weekend was always going to be the must-see event of 2021 as far as this writer was concerned, and it certainly didn't disappoint. "It's the noise, not only are they a thing of beauty, it's a proper engine noise — which is missing in modern-day racing," says Alex Amon, son of Chris, who awarded the trophies post-race and was also witnessing these cars in action for the first time. "It's everything about them, the look of them is stylish and quick."

It was hard to disagree, and the sight of them being driven at speed was just as impressive as the noise, with three-time British Touring Car champion Gordon Shedden and others pushing their machines to the limit. This was a proper race and these cars were being driven as they were always intended — on the edge.

It was the same across all the series and championships that took to the Donington circuit, whether it was Rudiger Friedrichs sawing at the wheel of his Alvis Firefly in the Pre-War Sports Car race, or Roy Alderslade and 2013 BTCC champion Andrew Jordan

"The only ingredient missing from the mix was spectators lining the grass banks"

hustling their battle-scarred Shelby Daytona Cobra Coupe to second spot in the three-hour Pall Mall Cup.

After its cancellation in 2020 due to COVID-19, the 10th running of the Donington Historic Festival needed just such a weekend and the only ingredient missing from the mix was spectators lining the grass banks. Something which no doubt was made all the more frustrating for fans after seeing footage of people squashed shoulder to shoulder at The Crucible for the final of the World Snooker Championship over the weekend.

Organiser Motor Racing Legends and partner/sponsor DK Engineering had at least secured a livestreaming deal at the 11th hour, ensuring that people could still view all the racing action from the comfort of their own homes, although this might have been scant consolation for some.

By being livestreamed for the first time, though — which could become a regular feature of the event — hopefully it also attracted the attention of general motorsport enthusiasts, perhaps even those completely new to racing, and not just diehard historic fans who had intended to be at the event.

It's certainly not every day or even every meeting where you can see Stirling Moss's 1961 Monaco Grand Prix-winning Lotus 18 in action as part of the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association races for pre-1966 Formula 1 machines.

More than 50 years ago, some of these cars were racing at the pinnacle of the sport. It would be the equivalent of watching Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes W12 racing competitively in 2071, albeit that this might be a tad unrealistic such is the complexity of modern hybrid machines and the small army required to even turn them on, let alone race them in private hands.

Also, unlike modern cars, it's striking how noticeable the characteristics of each historic car are, almost like it has a personality, such was the individuality of the manufacturers of that era and precision needed to drive them. Perhaps this is why it's such an attractive proposition for professional drivers both young and old. As well as Shedden, BTCC regular Rory Butcher was at the wheel of a Porsche 911 in the Pall Mall Cup, as was ex-BTCC driver Sam Tordoff, who was driving his dad's MGB, while European Le Mans Series driver Richard Bradley was out in Formula Junior.

Almost all of the cars in action last weekend are priceless, one-of-a-kind machines. In most other walks of life something so significant would be confined to a museum. But to do so would go against why these machines were built in the first place: to race. And they encapsulate the history and heritage of motorsport, which must be showcased.

Technological advancements have always been a part of motorsport and that isn't going to change, with the inevitable rise of electric, hybrid and whatever means of power comes next.

But, while it's right — and indeed, necessary — that motorsport evolves with the times, we can't forget about the past. Events like the Donington Historic Festival and its eclectic mix of series and championships need to be embraced and even protected.

Standing watching the GT40s in action, this writer couldn't help but think the next generation of motorsport enthusiasts might find such a car to be too loud, for example. It's perhaps a silly thought, but also a slightly sad one, and should historic racing and these wonderful cars appear less and less, that might very well be the case. It might not be long before they are just museum pieces, and that would be a damn shame. ❧

[P76 DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL REPORT](#)

Harvey and Wills secure Pall Mall Cup

DONINGTON PARK
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Roger Wills and Tim Harvey proved to be the class of the field in the three-hour Pall Mall Cup contest at the Donington Historic Festival, as they guided their Lotus 15 to victory by almost a lap.

The pair qualified second, albeit only just over a tenth behind the Roy Alderslade-owned Shelby Daytona Cobra Coupe, which he was sharing alongside 2013 British Touring Car champion Andrew Jordan who, along with dad Mike, had built the car.

Wills moved to the front of the 47-car field almost instantly before an oil spill stretching from the top of the Craner Curves to Coppice instigated a 20-minute safety car period in the first half-hour as a number of cars came to grief on the slippery surface. Alderslade was among them, spinning and causing cosmetic damage to the Cobra.

Most of the field made the first of two mandatory pitstops during the caution period, with 1992 BTCC champion Harvey and Jordan taking over their respective cars. Another caution period before the end of the first hour gave those who hadn't pitted the opportunity to stop, and Harvey move back into the lead with a five-second advantage over Jordan, with Simon Evans and James Littlejohn's Lotus Elan 26R a lap down in third. By the time Harvey brought the Lotus in again, just after the halfway point, the lead was over 30s, with Wills extending the gap to nearly three-quarters of a minute once Alderslade had taken



Dominant performance from Wills and Harvey in their Lotus 15

over the Cobra for the final stint.

The status quo remained for the final hour as Wills cruised to the flag, only nursing a gearbox issue on the final lap, which allowed Alderslade to unlap himself, as Richard Kent and Chris Ward's Jaguar E-type completed the podium a lap down.

James Cottingham, Olly Bryant and Harvey Stanley's E-type was promoted to fourth in the final 10 minutes as Cottingham's other machine, a Lister-Jaguar Costin that he shared with Max Girardo, conked out. Andrew Haddon/Shawn Lynn (Lotus Elan S1) took fifth despite an extra trip through the pits, while Evans and Littlejohn lost a top-five finish due to a broken rear wishbone.

Cottingham and Bryant *just* won the Stirling Moss Trophy encounter at the wheel of a Ecosse Tojeiro-Jaguar as the latter took back the lead from Rob Smith (Lister Knobbly) moments before a red

flag appeared with 10 minutes remaining after a big crash for Ben Adams' Lola Mk1 exiting the Old Hairpin. Smith and Ward took second from Gary Pearson's Costin-bodied Lister as Gregor Fisker/Sam Hancock (HWM-Jaguar) won the concurrent Woodcote Trophy in seventh.

Pearson had already claimed victory earlier in the Jaguar Classic Challenge, having been in control of the E-type contest from the start. When a safety car coincided with the opening of the pit window, it prompted everyone to stop, ensuring his lead was never under threat as Kent/Ward took second from Marcus Oeynhausens-Sierstorpff in the final minutes.

Justin and Ben Maeers (GN Parker) finished first in the 40-minute Pre-War Sports Car race, benefiting when race-long leader Rudiger Friedrichs (Alvis Firefly) had to serve a drivethrough penalty for a short mandatory pitstop. Friedrichs was still



Justin and Ben Maeers (112) took Pre-War Sports Car win, but only just

WEEKEND WINNERS

PALL MALL CUP

Roger Wills/Tim Harvey (Lotus 15)

STIRLING MOSS/WOODCOTE TROPHY

James Cottingham/Olly Bryant (Tojeiro-Jaguar)

JAGUAR CLASSIC CHALLENGE

Gary Pearson (E-type)

PRE-WAR SPORTS CAR

Justin/Ben Maeers (GN Parker)

HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHALLENGE

Andy Middlehurst/Jonathan Bailey (Nissan Skyline)

FORMULA JUNIOR**Front-engined** Chris Drake (Terrier T4)**Rear and combined races** Richard Bradley (Brabham BT2)**HGPCA****Races 1 & 2** Will Nuthall (Cooper T53)**AMON CUP FOR FORD GT40s**

Gordon Shedden/Miles Griffiths

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

runner-up, less than 5s off the lead but only three tenths ahead of Frederic Wakeman and Patrick Blakeney-Edwards' Frazer Nash.

Andy Middlehurst and Jonathan Bailey were gifted the Historic Touring Car Challenge win, as first the similar Nissan Skylines of polesitter Ric Wood/Nick Whale and race leader Simon Garrad retired, before a well-timed safety car allowed them to pull out nearly a lap on Craig Davies/Steve Soper (Ford Sierra Cosworth RS500) in second.

Chris Drake came out on top of a thrilling three-car scrap in the front-engined Formula Junior race. Ray Mallock's U2 started from pole and initially led but was soon caught in a fight with Drake's Terrier T4 and Andrew Hibberd's Lola Mk2 as the gaps between the trio ebbed and flowed as they lapped backmarkers.

The decisive move came on the penultimate lap, as Mallock was briefly slowed by a lapped car coming out of Coppice, allowing Drake the chance to make a move around the outside into the chicane.

Mallock made amends in the combined race for front- and rear-engined Formula Juniors, taking sixth as the highest-placed front-engined runner. European Le Mans Series driver Richard Bradley (Brabham BT2) crushed the opposition, lapping up to Mallock in the 20-minute contest.

Will Nuthall won both Historic Grand Prix Cars Association races, taking a 20-plus second victory each time in his ex-Bruce McLaren Cooper T53 from Jon Fairley's Brabham BT11/19.

STEFAN MACKLEY

HONOURING A MOTORSPORT GREAT

GT40 race was named in tribute to Le Mans winner Amon



Named in honour of Chris Amon, who – along with Bruce McLaren – took the Ford GT40 programme's first victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1966 (in MkII form), the Amon Cup is a welcome addition to Motor Racing Legends' roster in 2021.

Two 80-minute races exclusively for the legendary machines are scheduled this season, with the first of those taking place at the Donington Historic Festival. And, while COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented a number of overseas drivers from competing, an encouraging 11 cars took to the race, with three-time British Touring Car champion Gordon Shedden among the entry.

"I think it's really good, you've only got Spa and Goodwood where it's got standalone races and which are highly competitive," said the Scot, who will make his BTCC return this weekend. "It was really important to support this event, I think it's got great potential and it would be nice to have a little GT40 mini-series."

Sharing Philip Walker's GT40 with Miles Griffiths, the trio having guided the car to Spa 6 Hours success in 2019, Shedden was confident of being in contention for victory despite only qualifying fifth – which soon proved to be the case.

James Cottingham led initially followed by polesitter Olly Bryant, Harvey Stanley and Shedden, with James Hanson keeping

in touch as the front five stretched away in the early stages.

Bryant soon began to slip back with a misfire as Shedden made his move for second up the inside of Stanley into Redgate after 20 minutes and set about closing down Cottingham's lead.

Having just passed the half-hour mark, he made the move into the chicane, as Cottingham began to nurse a car that was struggling with brakes as early as lap three, with Hanson eventually finding a way by for second at Redgate.

With less than 35 minutes remaining, Shedden handed over to Griffiths, who took victory by nearly 20 seconds from Andy Newall, who shared with Hanson. Stanley/David Cuff completed the podium more than a minute behind the winners as seven of the 11 cars made it to the chequered flag.

Any chance of a rostrum for Cottingham/Andrew Smith evaporated when the latter brought the car in with gearbox problems, a consequence of it being overused from the outset to try and help slow the car down. Bryant too failed to make it to the end following a problem with the distributor.

On hand to present the trophies was Alex Amon, Chris's son, who felt the new series was a fitting tribute to his dad.

"[The GT40] was a car that brought him arguably his greatest success and when I was approached by Duncan [Wiltshire, MRL] and James [Cottingham, of partner/sponsor DK Engineering] about whether would we like to have his name put to this series we said absolutely we would," he said.

"He deemed this [Le Mans win] his greatest achievement so to put his name to this series was a big tribute."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Shedden and Griffiths came out on top



Sturges won Open Series and New Millennium races in his Leon and Slicks Series in his Golf



Sturges snares Super Saturday treble at Thruxton

THRUXTON
CSCC
1-2 MAY

Emulating local Jaguar E-type ace John Burbidge's Modsports 1970s feats, three more Classic Sports Car Club victories for Kimpton's Jamie Sturges on Saturday took the SEAT Leon and VW Golf TCR racer's Thruxton tally to seven in three seasons.

Second in the Spanish machine, behind poleman Jack Layton's BMW E46 M3 in the first Open Series thrash, whetted Sturges's appetite. Thereafter it was golds all the way in the 300bhp turbocharged tourers.

The opener was red-flagged within seconds when the M3s of Dominic Malone (ex-Andy Priaulx E46 WTCC) and fast-starting Adam Howarth (E36) collided as the field squeezed into Allard corner. Howarth was launched into Andrew Rath's Lotus Europa. Layton stormed ahead, leaving Sturges to repel David Gardner (E36 M3). Max Petch (Ginetta

G50) battled back to the head of a jostling quintet, and inherited fourth when David Harvey's Lotus 340R failed at the chicane.

Switching to the Golf, Sturges outran Chris Everill's Chevrolet LS3-engined Ginetta G50 and Bryan Bransom's E36 M3, the only Slicks Series survivors. Richard Wheeler's Nissan Skyline GT-R — on pole with a staggering 1m14.268s (114.20mph) lap — was scarpering when it broke.

Sturges aced the second Open race from Chris Mills (in the Gardner M3), Bransom and Malone, all blanketed by 2.8 seconds. David Trigg's Toyota-powered Lotus Exige V6 Cup was best GT in fifth. Rain, then hail, advantaged Sturges in the New Millennium finale. Gardner/Mills and Matthew Sanders/Layton were distant pursuers.

Charlie Newton-Darby easily overcame the 30-second penalty for winning Oulton Park's Turbo Tin Tops opener his Mini Cooper S R53 to beat Will Powell's Renault Clio. Keith Issatt (Mini Clubman) survived several moments to place third ahead of

Lisa Selby/Toby Harris (Ford Fiesta ST).

Quickest in Magnificent Sevens qualifying, Stephen Nuttall took a five-place drop for his Oulton victory, but soon led. When the safety car was deployed, after early leader Stephen James spun at Campbell and was collected by Rich Webb, unfathomably Nuttall and Ben Simonds kept circulating. Tim Davis beat the Pittard brothers, Jonny and Christian, with John Cutmore (Spire-Suzuki RB7) breaking the Caterham monopoly in fourth.

Dave Griffin's E36 M3 blitzed Modern Classics, despite losing his door on Woodham Hill, legacy of a first-corner biff when Doug Simmen's similar car spun. Alan Thompson (another E36 M3) put together a sensational last lap to rob TVR Tuscan duo Stuart Daburn and Matt Holben of second.

With five Special Saloons & Modsports wins apiece here since 2016, it seemed inconceivable that neither Ian Hall (Darrian Wildcat) nor Andy Southcott (spaceframe Lenham Midget-Vauxhall) would add another. Yet Southcott's diff blew in race one while challenging Hall, who "slowed too much" and was ambushed by Tom Carey's Honda CRX, who had shot from the back.

Carey (oil pressure) and Hall (piston) missed the sequel, leaving Southcott favourite. Southcott rounded Wayne Crabtree's Subaru turbo-powered Ford RS200 into the chicane, only to vault the kerbs and lose out. Behind Rod Birley's ex-Garrie Whittaker BMW M3, Jack Gadd (SHP Escort-Millington) enjoyed a fabulous dice for fourth with Malcolm Harding (Escort-BDG Mk2), whose experience told.

Bill Lancashire's Morgan Future Classics victory was the more satisfying because he downed his previous TVR Tuscan with

A doorless Griffin still charged to New Millennium spoils



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JONES

WEEKEND WINNERS

OPEN SERIES

Race 1 Jack Layton (BMW E46 M3)

Race 2 Jamie Sturges (SEAT Leon TCR)

SLICKS SERIES

Jamie Sturges (Volkswagen Golf TCR)

NEW MILLENNIUM

Jamie Sturges (SEAT Leon TCR)

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

Tim Davis (Caterham C400)

TURBO TIN TOPS

Charlie Newton-Darby (BMW Mini Cooper S R53)

MODERN CLASSICS

Dave Griffin (BMW E36 M3)

SPECIAL SALOONS & MODSPORTS

Race 1 Thomas Carey (Honda CRX-BDG)

Race 2 Wayne Crabtree (Ford RS200-Subaru T/C)

CLASSIC K

Paul Tooms (Lotus Elan)

FUTURE CLASSICS

Bill Lancashire (Morgan +8)

SWINGING SIXTIES

Oliver Reuben (TVR Griffith)

TIN TOPS

Andrew Windmill (Honda Civic Type R)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Tony Blake up. Blake's son Aston had started it strongly, engaging Daburn, who lost third to the inspired Matthew Lewis (Talbot Sunbeam Lotus) last time round.

Hampshireman Paul Tooms drove his Lotus Elan brilliantly to win an exciting one-hour Classic K finale. Allen Tice (Marcos-Volvo 1800GT) shadowed him, but the car faded under Chris Conoley, who nonetheless kept Peter Thompson/Charlie Allison's freshly-built Shelby Cobra behind.

Two sensational scraps raged between Mini Cooper S king Nick Swift and Ollie Streek, in the company of Lyndon Griffin (Elan), and the one-litre Ginetta G4s of doughty clubmen Nigel Winchester and Brian Lambert. Soloist Streek earned fourth as his rivals' partners could not keep up. Alas the Ginettas' drivetrains wilted in unison after several exchanges.

Oliver Reuben howled dad Nigel's TVR Griffith away from the Swinging Sixties pack, a country mile clear of Jamie Keevill (Elan) and Ray Barrow (Chevrolet Camaro). Andrew Windmill repeated 2020's Tin Tops success. Eric Boulton was a deserved second in his Honda Civic, outrunning Nigel Tongue (306).

MARCUS PYE



ALEX'S ASTON STARS Ninety-five years after his Bentley Boy grandfather Tommy Thistlethwayte competed in the Le Mans 24 Hours, Alex Thistlethwayte debuted his stunning Aston Martin DB4 GT at his local circuit. "It was my first racing car – I bought it from Darren McWhirter about eight years ago and Mike Dowd has rebuilt it to lightweight spec," said the CSCC regular. Shaken down in Saturday's Open Series races, the Aston was more at home finishing sixth in Sunday's Pre-1966 Classic K finale.



GADDS' GLORIOUS FORDS A spectacular 100mph best lap by Jack Gadd in Sunday's Special Saloons & Modsports race highlighted his and father David's CSCC debuts. Nobody missed their stunning Ford Escort Mk1s fettled by Sonny Howard Preparations in Ely. Jack raced the RSR spaceframe car, making increasingly confident use of its 2.4-litre short-stroke engine, which develops over 400bhp. David was in the more conventional Gartrac steel-shelled version, with a torquier 2.7-litre, 380bhp engine.



BROWES BMW Suffolk father and son Paul and Luke Browes gave their spectacular BMW M3 GTR its first outing in the New Millennium race. Based on the Geoff Steel Racing car in which Abbie Eaton won a 2015 GT Cup round, the bewinged monster has been rebuilt by the Stowmarket Glass proprietors. The M3 was a big step up in performance for the pair at Thruxton, of which they had little experience. "We need mileage so had to start somewhere," said Browes Sr, who survived a grassy spin amid the drizzle.

Father-and-son crews take GT Cup glory

BRANDS HATCH
MSVR
1 MAY

Stewart and Lewis Proctor and their Balfe Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3 snatched victory in the opening race of the second round of this year's GT Cup, heading a mammoth 45-car entry on the full Brands Hatch circuit. A less surprising success came in race two for the Abba Racing Mercedes of Richard and Sam Neary, the combination that dominated at Donington Park.

The Nearys were fastest qualifiers with the Michael Igoe/Phil Keen Lamborghini next, but Igoe started race one from the pits and soon succumbed to brake woes, while the Mercedes had a puncture and a penalty for a pitstop infringement, finishing a lap behind in 10th.

This left the Barwell Huracans of solo drivers Adam Balon and Leo Machitski duelling for the lead until a brief safety car intervention brought Phil Quaife's Lamborghini and the Proctors' McLaren into the reckoning. As the leaders jostled for supremacy, Lewis Proctor seized his opportunity and hit the front.

The Quaife/John Dhillon car finished a close second and Machitski was third on the road. But he had Sennan Fielding right behind on a late charge in the



Nearys were once again at the front of GT Cup field

Nissan he shared with Grahame Tilley. Machitski squeezed the Japanese car terrifyingly close to the pitwall, earning disqualification from the meeting.

Richard Neary followed Balon for a few laps in race two before heading clear and, apart from the pitstop period, the Mercedes was firmly in charge from then on. Balon's second place came under pressure from Keen, but Keen had inherited a time penalty for a safety car infringement given during Igoe's otherwise impressive progress from a pitroad start to third. Igoe was helped by a caution period to pull the Nissan out

of the barriers following a tangle. The Huracan duo nevertheless finished third as the Nick Jones/Scott Malvern Porsche was too far behind to benefit from the penalty. The Proctor McLaren and Lucky Khera's Huracan completed the top six.

Behind the leading GT3 cars, the Britcar-winning Huracan of John Seale and Abbie Eaton won GTO in seventh overall in race one. Their main rivals retired early but, in race two, Richard Chamberlain's Porsche surged from the back of the grid – after blowing a boost hose in the first contest – to win the class in ninth, with the Huracan

Joy for Jones as Pickup Trucks make race return

MALLORY PARK
BARC
1 MAY

Reece Jones made a perfect start to his 2021 Pickup Truck Racing campaign as the category returned to action on the Mallory Park oval after a one-year hiatus.

Daniel Petters led the first race from pole initially, but his momentum was sapped by running wide at Turn 3 on

lap four of 25 and Dean Tompkins broke through, with Petters's ill-handling truck eventually dropping back to fifth.

Tompkins had built a decent advantage before a backmarker closed up the pack – such that, when he skated over the grass at Turn 3, the lead was briefly taken by Dale Gent before reigning champion George Turiccki established himself up front for the next 11 tours.

When Gent spun out of second at

Turn 2 on lap 16, Jones – up from row three – found himself promoted to second, and he set a string of fastest laps as he reeled in Turiccki before diving to the inside at Turn 3 just over two laps from the end to grab the honours. Michael Smith completed the podium.

Petters again led away in the rematch, this time hanging on for the first nine laps before a big twitch on the exit of Turn 2 left the door open for Jones to pounce at the end of the back straight. Petters initially clung on to second place this time, but made a bad restart after a safety car period and again dropped to fifth.

The caution had been called when Smith's truck became stranded on the exit of Turn 3 – he had got tangled up in an incident that began when Turiccki launched up the inside of Gent for third



Foster produced an FF1600 masterclass



Clark leads Morris, but was fortunate to win race two after countback



Payne won two frantic races for the 420R class of 7 Race Series

and the Steve Burgess/Ben Dimmack Radical RXC next.

Simon Clark's Cayman dominated the first Porsche Club Championship encounter, leaving Mark McAleer and son Jake to squabble with Peter Morris for the next three places.

A quick start and stern defensive driving kept Morris in front of an interrupted second race. A second red flag stoppage on only the third lap of the rerun led to the result being decided on countback, which gave Clark victory by 0.001s as he was fractionally ahead across the line a lap

earlier. Richard Styrin and Paul Simpson were best of the Boxsters.

Almost 80 Caterhams contested four 7 Race Series events, open to three different classes. Ian Payne, Jon Mitchell and Anthony Barnes were first, second and third in both outings for 420R cars, but the laps between lights and chequered flag were packed with typical Caterham antics. Races for 1600 and 270R cars went respectively to David Yates and Jay McCormack, who finished with Yates right on his tail.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

WEEKEND WINNERS

BRANDS HATCH

GT CUP

Race 1 Stewart Proctor/Lewis Proctor (McLaren 750S GT3)

Race 2 Richard Neary/Sam Neary (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

PORSCHE CLUB

Races 1 & 2 Simon Clark (Cayman S)

7 RACE SERIES - 420R

Races 1 & 2 Ian Payne

7 RACE SERIES - 1600/270R

Race 1 David Yates

Race 2 Jay McCormack

MALLORY PARK

PICKUP TRUCK RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Reece Jones

NORTHERN & SUPER CLASSIC FF1600

Races 1 & 2 Joey Foster (Firman 2021)

NORTHERN SALOON & SPORTS CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jon Woolfitt (Spire GTR, below)

MG OWNERS' CLUB

Races 1, 2 & 3 Steve McDermid (ZR 170)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

position. Tompkins picked through it to finish second, while Turiccki was third.

The Northern & Super Classic Formula Ford grid may have been well-subscribed, but the contests they provided were less impressive. That's to take nothing away from a masterclass from category legend Joey Foster, who dominated both races in his Don Hardman-run Firman 2021.

Perhaps the best chance for a crowd-pleasing race — had there been a crowd — was for Foster to make bad starts and have to fight his way ahead of Jack Wolfenden's Firman RFR17. But, in race one, Foster passed him within half a lap, and he led from the off both times in race two, for which a restart was required when Oliver Chapman's PRS shed a wheel at the hairpin.

In fact, Wolfenden's tardy getaway in the second attempt provided some interest as he dropped to fifth, and he only got back to second by outbraking Ben Tinkler's Ray at Shaw's Corner on lap six of 15.

Outside of the podium places (and the



There was no stopping Jones on the Mallory oval

Pro class), Jordan Harrison produced two strong drives in his Lola T540E to take divisional spoils from Simon Hadfield's Hawke DL2B and the more modern Swift SC94F of Chris Hodgen, who ran fourth overall for a while in the second bout.

There was a wonderful battle in the Northern Saloon and Sports Car opener between brothers Paul and Jon Woolfitt.

They had both just lapped the third-placed Marcos Mantis of Colin Simpson when it was resolved two laps from the end, Jon's Spire GTR grabbing the advantage from Paul's Lotus Exige at the hairpin. Jon romped home in race two, with the Exige fading to third behind the Elise of David Brewis.

IAN SOWMAN



motorsport
JOBS

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Second BMW Car Club race, won by Piercey, was held in the wet on bank holiday Monday

Piercey shines in treacherous conditions at Mayday Madness

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC
3 MAY

Twenty years after he shone in Junior Formula Ford Zetec, former motorcycle racer Lee Piercey mastered wet conditions to win the second BMW Car Club race on Castle Combe's Mayday Madness bill.

From fifth on the grid in his E36 M3, Piercey made a fabulous getaway to be third by Quarry, and then seized the lead on lap two. Thereafter, he staved off race-one victor Brad Sheehan, whose windscreen subsequently fogged up. "The name of the game was keep it on the island," said Piercey.

Niall Bradley and Paul Cook completed an E46 1-2-3 in the dry opener, chased by Rick Kerry's V8 M140, which the later storm rendered impotent. Ben Pearson (330ci) won his class twice, beating Jim Benson by a whisker initially, then splashing to a fine fifth overall in race two.

Tim Adams — son of 1989 World Sportscar C2 class champion Nick — made it three different Combe Hot Hatch

victors in as many races, having tracked opening-round victor Jordan Curnow's younger Honda Civic, which broke two laps from home. Second-round winner Chris Southcott's rapid but recalcitrant Peugeot 205 parked on the infield at Quarry on lap two, its engine tightened.

Shaun Goverd smelled fuel in his Peugeot 106 GTI, thus was surprised with a class-winning second. After a fight with Dave Spiller for third, Will Self (205) was gifted the place on the final lap when his rival's Mini was squeezed onto the grass when lapping. Tony Cooper (106) recovered superbly from a lap-one excursion at the Esses to finish fifth.

After a disastrous Easter Monday, brothers Gary and Adam Prebble regrouped and topped the soggy Combe Saloon round from the front row. Adam's Vauxhall led initially, but Gary — who arrived at Quarry sixth — passed him around the outside at Camp in the reworked SEAT Leon Cupra. The Audi TTs of Alex Kite and Tony Hutchings found little traction in the minor places. James Keepin (MG ZR 160) and Michael Good (Vauxhall Corsa) maintained their points lead.

Oliver White (Medina Sport JL17K) found grip at the start of the Combe Formula Ford race to outdrag polesitter Felix Fisher (Ray GR05), then drove faultlessly to extend his perfect record to three wins. Fisher took second ahead of Nathan Ward. Elated with a class win in his Swift SC92, Ward had double champions Luke Cooper (SC18) and Adam Higgins (Firman RFR21) behind.

Tony Bennett (Caterham R300) almost towed Alan Hamilton's Westfield past polesitter Ollie Bull at the Combe GT start, but it was business as usual for the Vauxhall

WEEKEND WINNERS

BMW CAR CLUB

Race 1 Brad Sheehan (E46 M3)

Race 2 Lee Piercey (E36 M3)

CCRC HOT HATCH CHALLENGE

Tim Adams (Honda Civic)

CCRC SALOONS

Gary Prebble (SEAT Leon Cupra)

CCRC FF1600

Ollie White (Medina Sport JL17K)

CCRC GT

Oliver Bull (Vauxhall Tigra)

750MC MAZDA MX-5s

Races 1, 2 & 3 Ben Short

DAVE ALLAN TROPHY

Dan Ludlow/Stuart Emmett
(Honda Civic Type R)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Tigra driver. Hamilton repassed Dominic Shepherd (Mitjet Audi-Nissan V6) for third, as Bradley John's 850bhp Mitsubishi E4 retired after pressurising its oil catch tank. Chris Everill spun his Ginetta G55 at Quarry on lap one but recovered to fifth.

Class act Ben Short won all three Mazda MX-5 races, the finale from eighth on the partially reversed grid. Double champion Ben Hancy and Michael Comber led the chase in the first and second legs, with Comber claiming second in the finale from Steve Foden.

The annual Dave Allan Trophy enduro, remembering the popular Honda development engineer, closed the afternoon in an inhospitable monsoon. Pro Will Powell led before spinning Dave Scaramanga's SEAT Cupra TCR at Camp. Fittingly, Dan Ludlow/Stuart Emmett won in their pristine Civic Type R run by Synchro Motorsport, in which Allan was a prime mover, by 50 seconds from the resurgent SEAT.

MARCUS PYE



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JONES

SEASON
PREVIEW

SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE SUPPORTS

Just two of the BTCC's usual support series will be in action this weekend, but there's still plenty to watch out for at Thruxton

STEPHEN LICKORISH

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Pulling (l) will face plenty of opposition in British F4 this season



Making history is the target for Abbi Pulling this year. No female driver has ever won in British Formula 4, let alone taken an FIA F4 title. Being the first to achieve those feats are aspirations for Pulling this season. "I made a lot of records in karting and I want to carry that success on," says the two-time Junior TKM karting champion.

Pulling had considered a move up the single-seater ladder but has decided to remain in F4 and launch a title bid. She claimed four podiums last year with JHR Developments en route to sixth in the standings, and is feeling more confident as she stays with the team for her sophomore season.

"It was 50/50 what I'd do – I was looking at doing the Formula Regional European championship and did a test with a team in

Spain," explains Pulling. "We couldn't find the budget and the best option was to come back and fight for the F4 title. I made a lot of mistakes last year, which I've learned from and have come back as a completely different driver – I feel I'm driving the best I've ever driven. I want to win the opener and just be consistent."

Winning the opener is a realistic goal given JHR's incredible form at Thruxton, the squad's drivers having won the last six F4 races held at the Hampshire speedbowl. But Pulling will face no shortage of opposition this weekend – the 17-car grid is larger than British F4's average field over the past three seasons. However, there are just three other drivers that have previously raced in the series among the entry. Expect this quartet to be fighting at the front but, unlike Pulling,

the other three have all changed teams.

Former Ginetta Junior champion James Hedley is aiming for more consistency after swapping JHR for Fortec, the squad that powered Luke Browning to last year's crown, while Roman Bilinski will be aiming to cut out some of his rookie errors having joined Carlin from Arden.

The final driver on the move is former Carlin racer Matias Zagazeta, who struggled last year but is feeling happier in his new surroundings at Argenti. "Everyone in the team is amazing – they're all hungry to win and that pushes you on," he says.

There's also a host of series rookies – many making their car racing debuts – and add in the category's new fully reversed-grid race and there will be plenty to watch out for in what could be a history-making season.

GINETTA JUNIOR

Rowledge may be a car racing rookie, but he's impressed Elite boss Ives



Considering Elite Motorsport drivers have won the past three Ginetta Junior crowns – and the squad played a key role in Tom Gamble's 2017 triumph, when he joined it for the final three events – you can be pretty sure that its racers will be in the mix again this year.

After Tom Lebbon made history last year by taking the crown as a rookie – when Elite's line-up was entirely made up of debutants – the squad has a greater range of experience among its roster this year. Seb Hopkins, a podium finisher last season, and Will Jenkins are back for a second campaign, while Joe Warhurst has some previous racing under his belt after contesting the last two events of 2020. Then there are also three rookies – Josh Rowledge, Max Hall and Jack Sherwood – with team boss Eddie Ives marking Rowledge out as a potential star. Sherwood was a last-

minute call-up after it "wasn't feasible" for Spain-based podium finisher Tommy Pintos to race this year amid continuing travel restrictions.

"I'm feeling pretty confident, but it's a tough championship and it's never going to be easy," says Ives. "I think we're in a stronger position now than this time last year. We hope Will and Seb will be there or thereabouts, and Josh has been showing some exceptional pace."

As has been the case for the past two seasons, the greatest threats to Elite are likely to come from R Racing, which has assembled another strong line-up. Josh Miller and Tom Edgar were two of last year's star rookies, while Freddie Tomlinson

"MORE AND MORE PEOPLE SEE THE CHAMPIONSHIP AS A VALID ROUTE TO SINGLE-SEATERS OR GTs"

and Aston Millar are back for another season. But it is debutants Ian Aguilera and Callum Voisin, younger brother of 2020 title contender Bailey, who Ives says have "caught our attention".

There are plenty of other rivals to beat as well, with the 27-car grid expected for Thruxton being a record first-round Ginetta Junior entry. "It's a championship that more and more people are aware of and see as a valid route to single-seaters or GTs," believes Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher, who says the category is getting stronger year-on-year. "Most of the British GT pairings had at least one Ginetta Junior graduate in them. European karting being difficult travel-wise has also potentially helped us a little bit."

All of that makes for an intriguing battle as the drivers face the high-speed Thruxton circuit as a tricky first test.

THE UNDERSTUDIES GRABBING THE ATTENTION

This weekend's British Touring Car Championship opener is a very unusual one as just two of its regular support categories will be in action, creating the chance for some different series to steal the opening-round spotlight.

More than 35 cars are expected to take part in the combined Ginetta GT5 Challenge and G40 Cup grid, which should make for a stunning spectacle. Last year's lead GT5 group have all moved on for this season, leaving a wide-open battle for the crown. Runaway 2020 G40 Cup champion Tom Golding (CTS) will be one to watch, as will Xentek Motorsport's Josh Steed and Conner Garlick – both podium finishers in the past – alongside junior racing graduates Will Orton (Alastair Rushforth

Motorsport) and Will Aspin (Elite).

The Mini Challenge Cooper class season has already begun, with 2017 champion Matt Hammond and Lee Pearce sharing the spoils in two close races at Snetterton last month. Defending champion Harry Dunn and 2020 race winners Dominic Wheatley and Leonardo Panayiotou are also likely to be in the mix.

Completing the guests this weekend is the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB. As Autosport closed for press, the Pro entry for the Cayman series was disappointing, with Lamborghini Super Trofeo ace Jack Bartholomew and sophomore drivers Theo Edgerton and Ethan Hawkey the leading contenders, while the Am division looks more competitive.



Defending champion Nunn is among Mini Cooper contenders

TRIBUTE TO A BYGONE ERA OF BRITISH ENGINEERING



TV SERIES SECRETS OF THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM

For many racing enthusiasts, Silverstone might

be the home of British motorsport, but it's certainly not the birthplace. Brooklands was the first purpose-built banked circuit in the world when it opened its doors in 1907, and it became a focal point for motorsport over the next 30-plus years.

Countless speed records were smashed along its 2.75-mile banked layout before the last race was held there in 1939. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the site became an airfield and fell into disrepair over the following decades.

The opening of the Brooklands Museum in 1991 has ensured that 'the crown jewels of British transport history' have been preserved, and a selection of its cars, bikes and planes feature in the 10-part series *Secrets of the Transport Museum*.

Thanks to Brooklands' lengthy affiliation with racing,

this is often where the main focus of each episode lies, such as running the 24-litre, 12-cylinder Napier Railton through its paces, which in period clocked 143.44mph on the outer circuit loop.

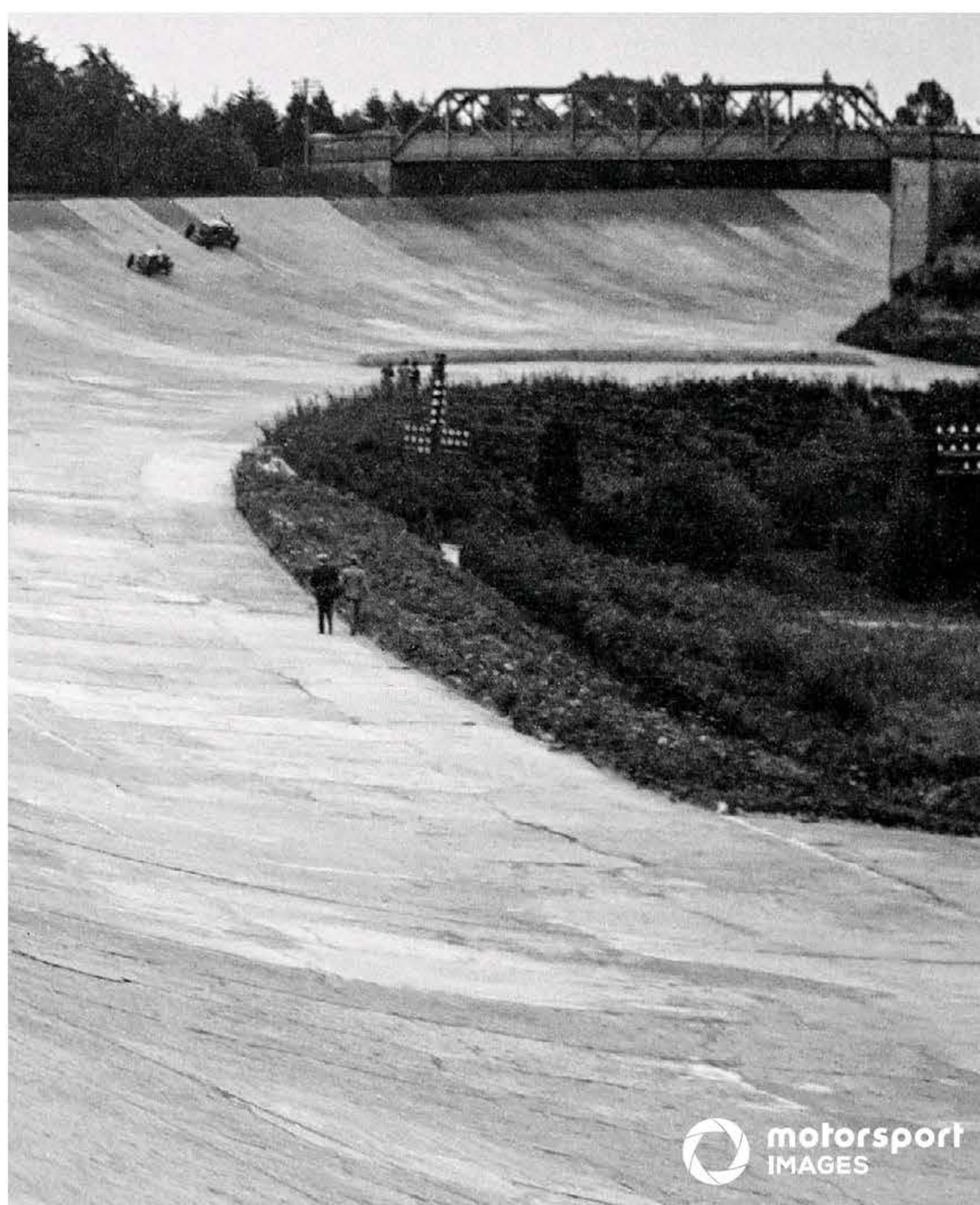
Learning about the history of each vehicle and the people behind them is the real appeal of the programme, from circuit co-owner Ethel Locke King being the first person to drive the circuit in 'Daisy' – a 1904 Siddeley Tourer – to a Wellington Bomber that crashed into Loch Ness in 1940 before being recovered years later.

As the name of the programme suggests, it's not just about racing cars, but other areas of transport, from the incredible Concorde to the largest collection of working historic London buses in the world. While these segments might not be for all petrolheads, there's enough quirkiness to be of genuine interest. It's not every day you see the last Routemaster bus being repainted by hand!

From a racing perspective, links are made to the present day to perhaps appeal to younger fans, with W Series driver Abbie Eaton appearing in an episode getting behind the wheel of a former land-speed record holder in the form of the 1923 10.5-litre Delage V12, and even a Mercedes-Benz EQ Silver Arrow 01

Twenty-four-litre
Napier Railton hit
143.44mph in period





motorsport
IMAGES



Mercedes Formula E car is a new exhibit

second-generation Formula E car is showcased as it's wheeled into the museum.

Perhaps the strongest theme that comes through loud and clear is that none of these historic cars, bikes or planes would be functional were it not for the dedicated volunteers, many of whom have spent years looking after the same machines. The programme offers the chance to put some of these characters in the limelight.

Getting a close-up of the inner workings of a museum piece while some maintenance task is performed is a highlight, but some can be a bit tedious to watch, such as a Harrier Jump Jet's deflated tyre getting pumped back up.

There is also a needless attempt to add drama by insinuating that there might be 'catastrophic' problems with damp in the wings of Concorde, with accompanying dramatic music and even a slow-motion shot before leaving the viewer on a mini cliffhanger.

Minutes later we return to find out that there is almost no problem at all, which after being repeated in almost every episode becomes tiresome. Thankfully, the majority of each 43-minute episode offers genuine interest. Brooklands has many machines that are one of a kind, and this programme highlights those that played a pivotal role in the history of transport.

The final four episodes of *Secrets of the Transport Museum* will be shown on Tuesdays at 2000 on Yesterday, with previous episodes available on demand at uktvplay.uktv.co.uk

STEFAN MACKLEY

FINISHING STRAIGHT

WHAT'S ON



INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Spanish Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship
Round 4/23
Barcelona, Spain
9 May

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1355
Highlights Sky Sports F1, Sun 1730, Channel 4, Sun 1830

Formula E

Round 4/8
Monte Carlo, Monaco
8 May

TV Live Eurosport 2 Sat 1430. Available via BBC Red Button, iPlayer and BBC Sport website

FIA Formula 3

Round 1/7
Barcelona, Spain
8-9 May

TV Live Sky Sports F1 Sat 0925, 1530, Sun 0940

Formula Regional European by Alpine

Round 2/10
Barcelona, Spain
8-9 May

GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup

Round 1/5

Magny-Cours, France
8-9 May

⚙ Livestream on Motorsport.tv Sat 0800, Sun 0800

TCR Europe

Round 1/11

Slovakia Ring, Slovakia
8-9 May

⚙ Livestream on Motorsport.tv Sat 1410, Sun 1250

NASCAR Cup Series

Round 12/36

Darlington, South Carolina, USA
9 May

TV Live Premier Sports 2 Sun 2030

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 9/33

Darlington, South Carolina, USA
8 May

Australian Supercars

Round 4/12

The Bend, South Australia, Australia
8-9 May

UK MOTORSPORT

Thruxton BARC*

8-9 May

British F4, BTCC, Ginetta GT5 Challenge, Ginetta Junior, Mini Challenge Trophy, Porsche Sprint Challenge

TV Live ITV4, Sun 1050

Snetterton BARC*

8-9 May

Britcar Endurance/Trophy, Caterhams: Sigma 135/Sigma 150/Sigmax, Hyundai Coupe Cup, Junior Saloons, Mini Miglia, Mini Se7en, Superkarts

Brands Hatch MSVR*

8-9 May

Allcomers, Bernie's V8s, CALM Porsche, Monoposto, Production BMWs/Golfs, Radical Challenge, Radical SR1 Cup, Southern Saloons, Sports 2000, Toyo Tires Saloons, Z Cars

Donington Park BRSCC*

8-9 May

AMOC GT Challenge, AMOC Intermarque, Aston Martin GT4 Challenge, Caterham 270R/310R/Roadsport/Seven UK, CityCar Cup, Fun Cup, Innes Ireland Cup, Jack Fairman Cup, Modified Fords, National FF1600

*Behind closed doors





FROM THE ARCHIVE

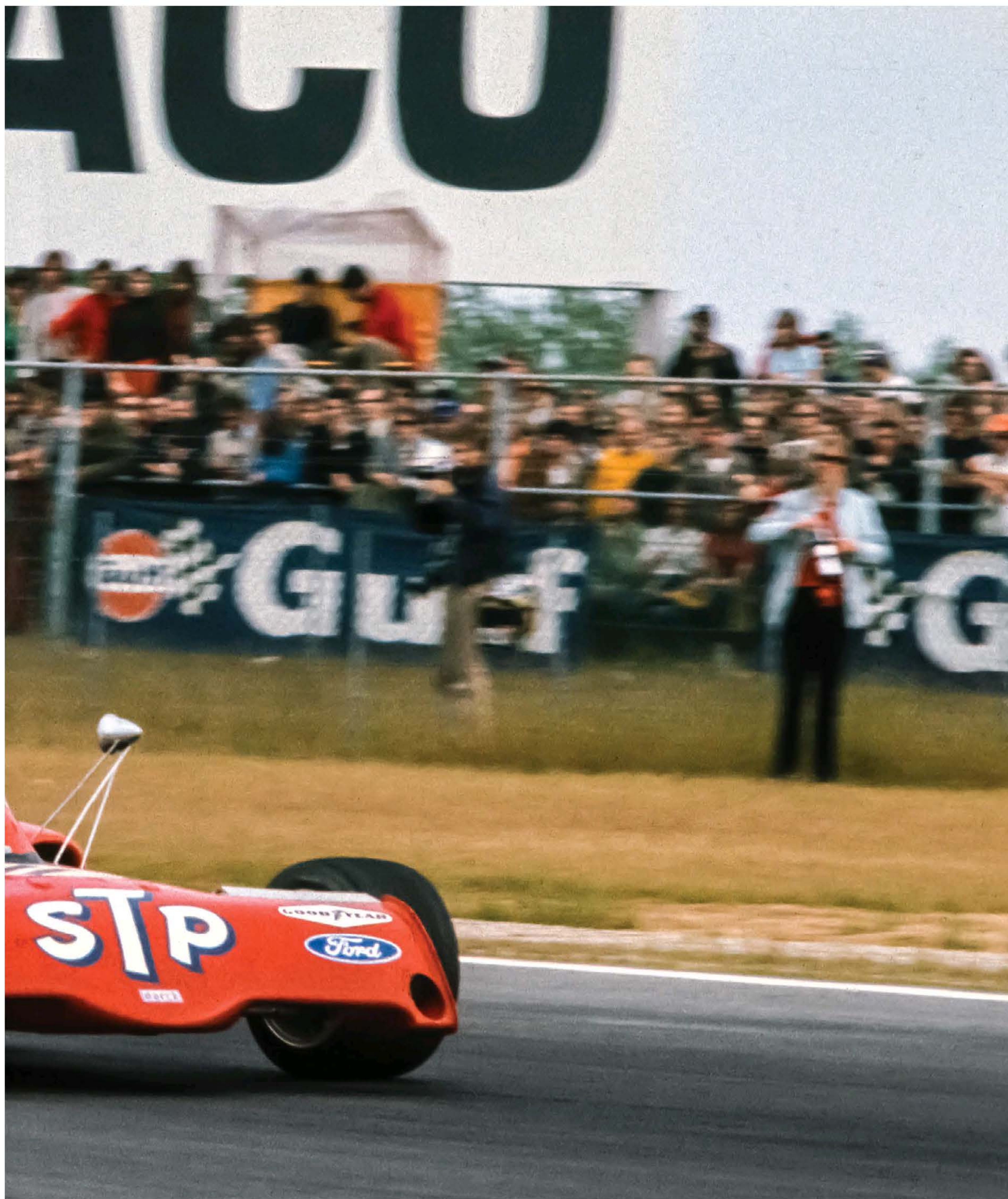
Ronnie Peterson adopts the stance with which he is most associated – and celebrated – in his March 721X during the 1972 Belgian Grand Prix at Nivelles-Baulers. The Swede

qualified 14th of 25 starters and come home in ninth place (14 cars made the finish), two laps down on the victorious, and dominant, Lotus 72D of Emerson Fittipaldi. Peterson's most notable contribution to the

afternoon's entertainment in Wallonia was a hard-fought battle with Rolf Stommelen's Eifelland 21, which was eventually decided by the latter's gearbox playing up, consigning the German to 11th.



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IN DEFENCE OF...

BALANCE OF PERFORMANCE

For all the clamour over Mercedes' domination of Formula 1 in recent years, it has never quite managed a 100% grand prix wins record. But in the 1998 FIA GT Championship it did just that, sweeping all 10 races to leave Porsche and Panoz – McLaren and Lotus had already called it a day the previous year – in its wake.

At season's end, the GT1 class collapsed and series founder Stephane Ratel vowed to learn a lesson. The result is Balance of Performance, a concept anathema to purists but now a pragmatic necessity whose reach has expanded to the very top of the sportscar racing landscape in the World Endurance Championship.

Opposition typically results from a desire to see the fastest cars prevail. Nothing wrong with that, and it's true that an unpleasant corollary of BoP-governed racing has been nefarious sandbagging. Remember the helpless tears shed by Porsche's then head of motorsport Frank-Steffen Walliser after his cars qualified 3.7 seconds down on the fastest Ford at Le Mans in 2016?

Penalising success also has its problems. The WEC's well-intentioned handicap

system, designed to give privateer entries a chance for the final LMP1 season of 2019-20, only meant that the intra-Toyota title showdown in Bahrain was a foregone conclusion. But as Toyota accepts, and the late 1990s prove, monopolies are desirable to nobody.

BoP has underpinned the growth of GT3 into a global phenomenon and made it a profitable avenue for OEMs to commit resource to, safe in the knowledge that there is no single 'best' car that will make their offering redundant. Grids are a feast of variety, with 11 manufacturers represented in GT World Challenge Europe last year.

In IMSA, BoP has successfully equalised the vastly differing engine philosophies of DPi constructors Cadillac, Acura and Mazda, each using the top class as a means to market road-going powertrains, and the same principle will apply in the WEC to balance the new Hypercars – and keep the new-for-2023 LMDh machines in check.

As we anticipate that new era's arrival, we know that BoP was likely a precondition for the proliferation of new manufacturer entries. It's surely a small price to pay.

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Who will reign in Spain?

FULL REPORT AS THE FORMULA 1 PACK HITS BARCELONA

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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is

published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd,

1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United

Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA

by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet

Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor,

Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage

paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records

are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd,

1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG.

Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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Seymour Distribution Ltd,

2 East Poultry Avenue,

London, EC1A 9PT.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.

Printed by William Gibbons

& Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary

Road, Willenhall,

Wolverhampton WV13 3XT.

ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport

is published weekly by

Autosport Media UK Ltd,

1 Eton Street, Richmond,

TW9 1AG.

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Trading as Autosport Media

UK. Publishing, trade and

further subscription details

on www.autosport.com.

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